


SARDAR PATEL

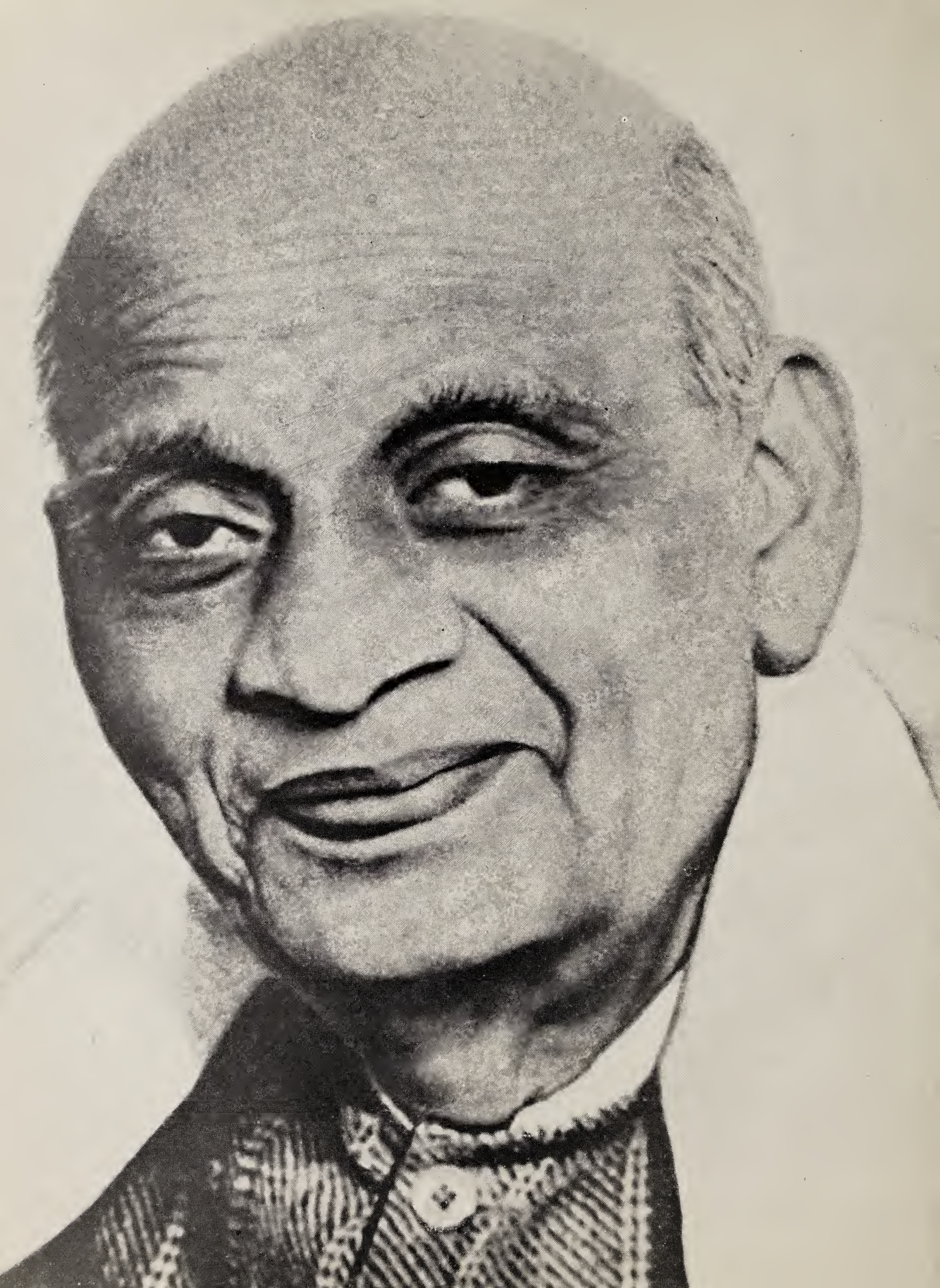


This album, brought out on the occasion of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth centenary, purports to be a vivid reminder rather than a complete record in pictures of the many-splendoured achievements of a patriot and statesman who, along with Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, dominated Indian politics during the crucial thirty years between 1920 and 1950. Not only was the sturdy Sardar in the very forefront of the struggle for freedom; he was also a far-seeing statesman and able administrator who did much to consolidate the country's nascent freedom by the consummate mastery and finesse with which he handled the grim, complex problems facing the new government. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "History will record many things about him in its pages and call him the builder and consolidator of new India."



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SARDAR PATEL

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VALLABHBHAI JHAVERBHAI PATEL occupies a prominent place among those heroic men and women who worked for India's freedom and helped not only to win it but also to consolidate it. Although he came to public life only in his early forties, his thirty-three years of work in the cause of the nation are full of many-splendoured achievements. Along with Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and some other leaders, he dominated the politics of the country during the crucial thirty years from 1920 to 1950. He was not only a great leader of the masses but also a far-seeing statesman and able administrator who handled with consummate mastery and finesse the complex problems facing the new Government. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "History will record many things about him in its pages and call him the builder and consolidator of new India...."

Vallabhbhai Patel was born on October 31, 1875 at Nadiad in the Kheda district of Gujarat. His parents Jhaverbhai Patel and Ladbai came of peasant stock. His father was a brave man. It is said that he had in early life enrolled himself in the army of Rani of Jhansi and fought against the British. Vallabhbhai was the fourth son in a family of five brothers and a sister.

He received his early education at Karamsad and then at Petlad, a small town some eleven km away, in a school where English was taught up to the fifth standard. He matriculated from the Nadiad High School.

The family could not finance his college education and, therefore, he prepared for the district pleaders' examination for which he had to borrow most of the books. He passed the examination and took up practice of law at Godhra, later shifting to Borsad, where he became quite proficient in handling criminal cases.

Like Abraham Lincoln, an illustrious American President, Vallabhbhai Patel was a self-made man who had worked with his father in the fields till he was seventeen. In 1893, when only 18, he married Jhaverbai. In 1909 when he was about 34 years old, his wife died after an operation in a Bombay hospital. When the news reached him at Borsad, he was in court arguing in a murder case. Totally unruffled, he went on arguing the case. But the news had stunned him. He never married again.

Vallabhbhai was keen on going to England and studying for the bar and saved money for the purpose. He wrote to a travel agency to arrange his passage. The firm addressed its reply to V.J. Patel and, as chance would have it, the letter was delivered to his elder brother Vithalbhai, who also wanted to go to England but had no money. Vallabhbhai not only let him go but also undertook to support his family during his absence. Vallabhbhai himself went to England later. He passed his final Bar-at-Law examination with first position and distinction for which he was awarded a cash prize of £50. He returned to India in February 1913 as a full-fledged barrister. On Vallabhbhai's arrival, Sir Basil Scott, the Chief Justice of Bombay, offered him an appointment in the Government Law School which Vallabhbhai declined. He did not want to serve the British Government. Patel specialised in criminal cases and soon had a flourishing practice. At this time, Patel's mode of living and dress was like that of a European. He was fond of playing bridge. He decorated his office with up-to-date furniture which, according to Sheth Kasturbhai, a leading businessman, was unique. He was a member of the Gujarat Club, rendezvous of Ahmedabad's fashionable society.

It was in 1917 that Patel first came in contact with Gandhiji, having been impressed by his leadership in the Champaran satyagraha. About this time, Gandhiji became the President of the Gujarat Sabha which held its first Political Conference at Godhra in November. Vallabhbhai was appointed its Secretary. The same year, he was elected a member of the Ahmedabad Municipal Board. Later, he became its President. He organised very successful relief operations during floods, drought and epidemics.

Vallabhbhai's political career had a modest beginning. The

first campaign organised jointly by Gandhiji and Patel was the Kheda satyagraha from March to June, 1918, in which, though the victory was not decisive, the sturdy peasantry of Vallabhbhai's home district learnt the lesson of fearlessness. A year later, when Gandhiji was arrested in April 1919, the people of Nadiad and Kheda soon showed the Government that they were not as mild as they looked.

The non-co-operation movement which Gandhiji launched on August 1, 1920 was a novel experiment in human history. No wonder, opinion even in the nationalist ranks was not united in support of it. Vallabhbhai, however, gave his whole-hearted support to Gandhiji's programme; and even before the special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta in September, he used his influence with the provincial leaders at the Gujarat Political Conference in August 1920 to persuade them to commit themselves to Gandhiji's programme and to recommend its adoption by the Congress. Though the movement failed in its political objective, Vallabhbhai's work made a deep impact by changing the climate of opinion in Gujarat, and eliminating from it the influence of old-style moderate politicians.

The non-co-operation movement was a watershed in India's long struggle to achieve freedom. For the first time after 1857, the British again felt their hold over India shaken. However, after the withdrawal of the movement following the Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922, and Gandhiji's arrest in March, the British Government seemed to be as firmly in control as ever.

Then came the Borsad satyagraha of 1923, when Gandhiji was in jail, and later in 1928, on a much more impressive scale, the Bardoli satyagraha. The epic struggle of Bardoli, which constitutes one of the most glorious chapters in the history of India's struggle for freedom, brought out in bold relief the basic traits of Vallabhbhai's personality—an indomitable will and perseverance, a fine sense of strategy and calculation, complete identification with the espoused cause, total disregard of sentimentalism, an iron discipline imposed upon himself and those working with him and selflessness to the point of self-denial. Bardoli, in fact, was a unique personal triumph for Vallabhbhai. It was in acknowledgement of the efficiency with which he

succeeds in bending me almost double with laughter over his unexpected sallies. Gloom hides her fiendish face in his presence. No disappointment, however great, can make him gloomy for long. And he will not let me be serious for two consecutive minutes. He will not spare even my saintliness.” Gandhiji, after release from jail, spoke of the tender feelings of Sardar Patel. In his words: “...I was well aware of his matchless bravery but....I never knew him to possess motherly qualities. If the slightest thing happened to me, he would be out of his bed. He superintended every detail in connection with my comforts.”

The Sardar's loyalty and affection did not, however, stand in the way of his disagreeing with the Mahatma when occasion demanded. For example, Vallabhbhai insisted on getting back for the Gujarat Vidyapith the library which, with Gandhiji's consent, had been handed over to the Ahmedabad Municipality while Vallabhbhai was in jail. Vallabhbhai had come to the aid of the Vidyapith when it was in financial difficulties during the twenties and had collected for it as much as ten lakhs of rupees. The Vidyapith had all along been rendering invaluable national service by producing alumni, qualified and willing to do work in the villages. When after the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement in 1934 the Vidyapith was revived, Vallabhbhai was made its Vice-Chancellor and later, after Gandhiji's death, Chancellor. The collection of books which Vallabhbhai thus saved in 1934 has now become one of the biggest libraries in Ahmedabad, and the Gujarat Vidyapith continues to supply well-trained village workers.

He was among the front-rank leaders who appreciated Gandhiji's intention of resigning from the Congress in 1934 to devote himself to the revival of village industries, and rendered all possible assistance to the new programme.

When the Congress decided to contest the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in November 1934, the main burden of the election campaign fell on Vallabhbhai and, though he himself had never been a whole-hearted supporter of the Parliamentary programme, he became, from now on, more and more involved in Parliamentary activity. Later, as Chairman of the Parliamentary Board, Vallabhbhai was in overall charge of the Congress

election campaigns both in 1937 and 1946 and established an efficient machinery not only for winning the elections but also for co-ordinating the work of the ministries and ensuring that the latter faithfully carried out the Congress policies and worked under the direction of the national organisation. The Sardar's work during this early phase of the Parliamentary programme was of inestimable value in creating an all-India framework for the functioning of provincial ministries and thereby preparing the ground for the evolution in post-independence India of a truly national political outlook.

Another sensitive problem which required most careful handling was that of the freedom struggle in the Indian states. With the winds of change blowing in British India, the subjects of the princely states were getting restive and beginning to organise themselves for civil and political rights. The Congress policy, laid down at Gandhiji's instance, had been one of avoiding direct interference in the affairs of the states and till then Gandhiji had even discouraged satyagraha in the states. This policy had the support of Vallabhbhai. Both knew that once the protection of the British Government ended, the Indian princes would not be able to resist the demands of their subjects, and they also felt that the princes would be patriotic enough to co-operate with the leaders of British India as soon as they were free to do so. But when Congress ministries started functioning in the provinces, the atmosphere in the country changed and the political organisations in Indian states began to demand affiliation with the National Congress and its support in their struggles against their rulers. At the Haripura Congress in February 1938 the Congress agreed to recognise organisations of the states' subjects and guide their movements. At the Tripuri Congress in March 1939 the policy was further revised and the struggle of the states' subjects was made part and parcel of the national struggle for freedom. The Sardar had all the time been in close contact with the leaders of the states' subjects in Gujarat and now began to take more active interest in guiding them. He presided over the conferences of the Prajamandals of Baroda and Bhavnagar states and entered into negotiations with the Rajkot ruler on behalf of the states' subjects. The struggle in Rajkot became an all-India issue and brought Gandhiji too on the scene. All these experiences

gave Vallabhbhai a first-hand picture of conditions in the Indian states and an insight into the working of the minds of Indian princes.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the national struggle entered its last phase and the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan added to it a dimension which was a challenge even for the phenomenal moral influence of the Mahatma. The events took such a turn and communal unrest reached such proportions that the majority of the national leaders became convinced that the choice was between partition, as demanded by the Muslim League, and anarchy in the country. Vallabhbhai had all along opposed the demand for Pakistan, but he was now among the first to accept the Mountbatten plan for partition. Accordingly, the Congress Working Committee took the fateful decision and Gandhiji himself persuaded the A.I.C.C. to accept it.

The 'finest hour' in the life of Sardar Patel came when he had to deal with the incorporation of over 560 princely states in the Indian Union. Lord Mountbatten, who had frequently discussed this subject with him, has written: "We were, of course, particularly closely associated in dealing with the future of the 565 Indian states. My instructions from the British Government were to hand back paramountcy to all the rulers on the transfer of power to British India. This would then in theory have created 565 entirely independent sovereign states within the borders of the Indian sub-continent.... There is no doubt that the high-minded statesmanship which Vallabhbhai Patel displayed throughout these very difficult negotiations made it possible to find a solution."

All the princes had entered into agreements with the paramount power and all were jealous of their rights and privileges. To persuade such a motley crowd to come to terms with the new India was a Herculean task. Sardar Patel appealed to their sense of patriotism and said: "We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour we can raise the country to a new greatness while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities. I hope the Indian states will bear in mind that the alternative to co-operation in the general interest is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin if we are unable to act together in the minimum of common tasks."

U.N. Dhebar in a commemorative lecture on Sardar Patel on September 5, 1975 said: “His contribution is oftentimes compared to that of Bismarck of Germany. If one goes, however, into the history of Germany as related by H.G. Wells, one would understand the great difference between the two. First, the integration of states that took place in India was on a much vaster scale. Secondly, it had to be worked out in much greater depth in India. Thirdly, there was a qualitative difference in the process adopted in the two countries....

“What was achieved in the brief span of two or three years and what we have inherited is something which everyone can be proud of—a united country under a single Constitution, under a single Parliamentary forum elected on the basis of adult suffrage, a united economic framework and a united army....

“Once when a seasoned worker was facing some domestic problem and wanted to retire, the Sardar said: ‘When I joined Gandhiji, I collected some firewood, lit a fire, put all considerations of my family, my career, my reputation and everything in the fire. I do not know what would be left of all these except the ashes.’ True to his words, when he died, his personal clothing was his only belonging.”

On his death, the *Manchester Guardian* wrote: “Patel was not only the organiser of the fight for freedom but also the architect of the new State when the fight was over. The same man is seldom successful as a rebel and a statesman. Sardar Patel was the exception.”



House in Karamsad (Gujarat) where Vallabhbhai Patel lived as a child



Vallabhbhai's mother Ladbai



Vallabhbhai as schoolboy
at Nadiad (Gujarat)



As district pleader,
Borsad (Gujarat)

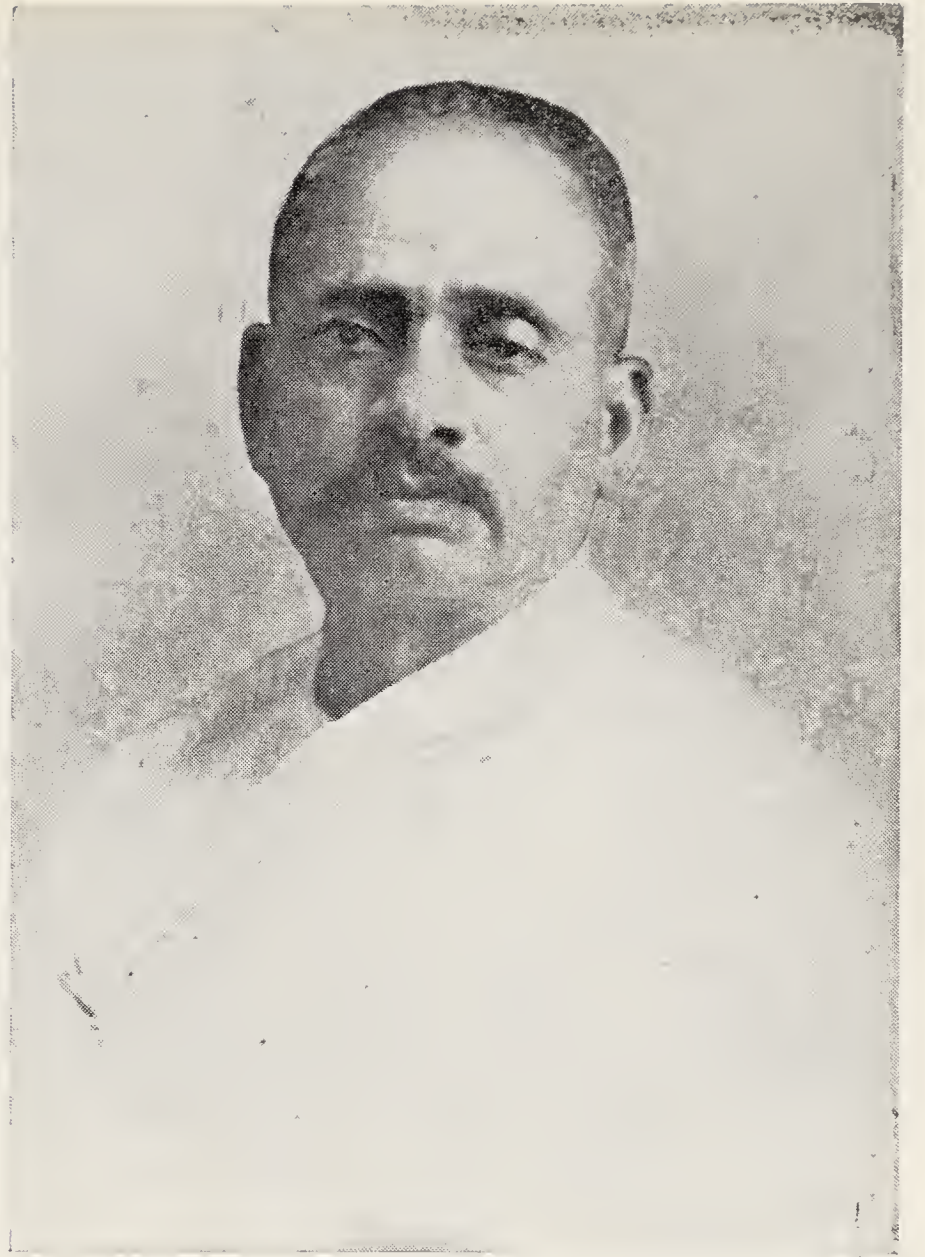
Gandhiji during the Kheda
satyagraha, 1918

Caring little for his lucrative
legal practice, Vallabhbhai
joined the movement under the
leadership of Gandhiji, who
later said about Vallabhbhai:

*“If it were not for his assistance,
I must admit that this campaign
would not have been carried
through so successfully.”*

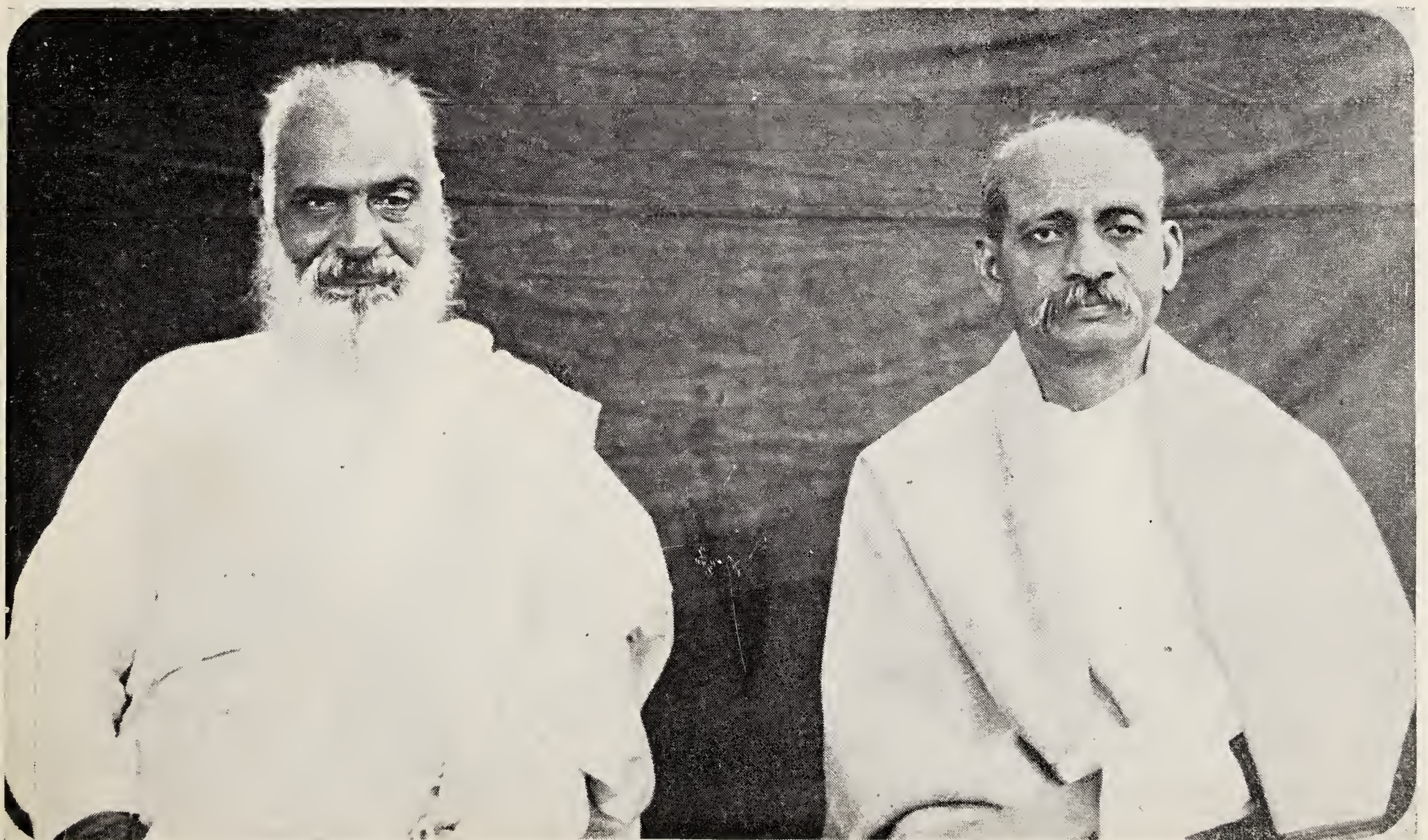


The two brothers, Vithalbhai
and Vallabhbhai (right), as
Barristers-at-Law on the latter's
return from England, 1913



Vithalbhai and Vallabhbhai (right)

In 1923 during the Nagpur flag satyagraha and the Borsad satyagraha against punitive police tax

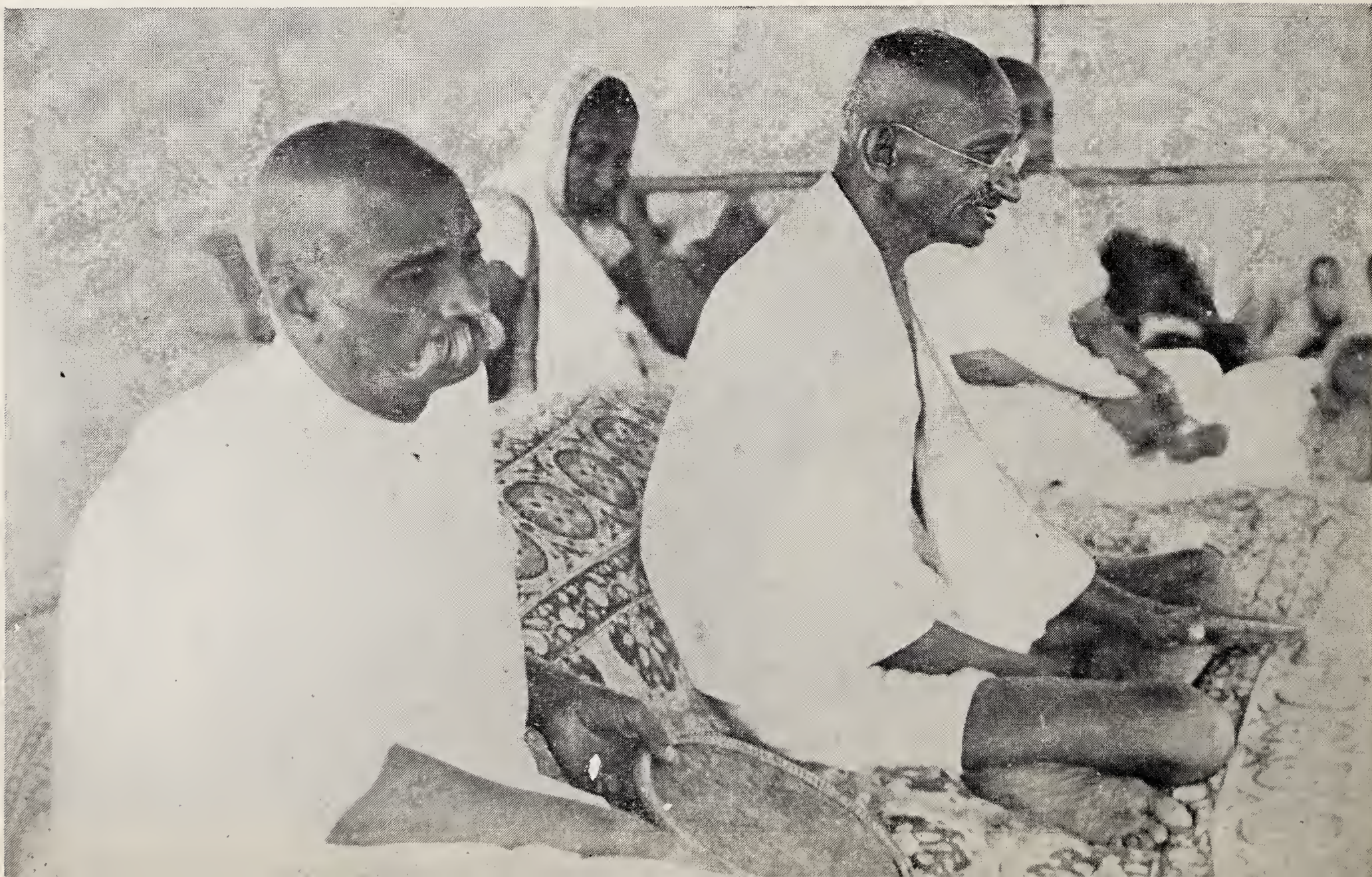


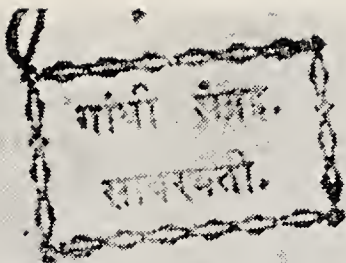


Ladbai with her five sons, 1927

(From left to right): Vithalbai, Somabhai, Kashibhai (standing),
Narsinhabhai and Vallabhbai

With Gandhiji at a public meeting, 1929





Vallabhbhai

Sarojinidevi says I should
go there for moral support
as my presence is
necessary and still useful
for a while work or long
discussions interfere
Bapu

Vallabhbhai organised flood relief work in Gujarat. Above is a message dated August 8, 1927 in Gandhiji's hand telegraphed from Bangalore where he was convalescing.

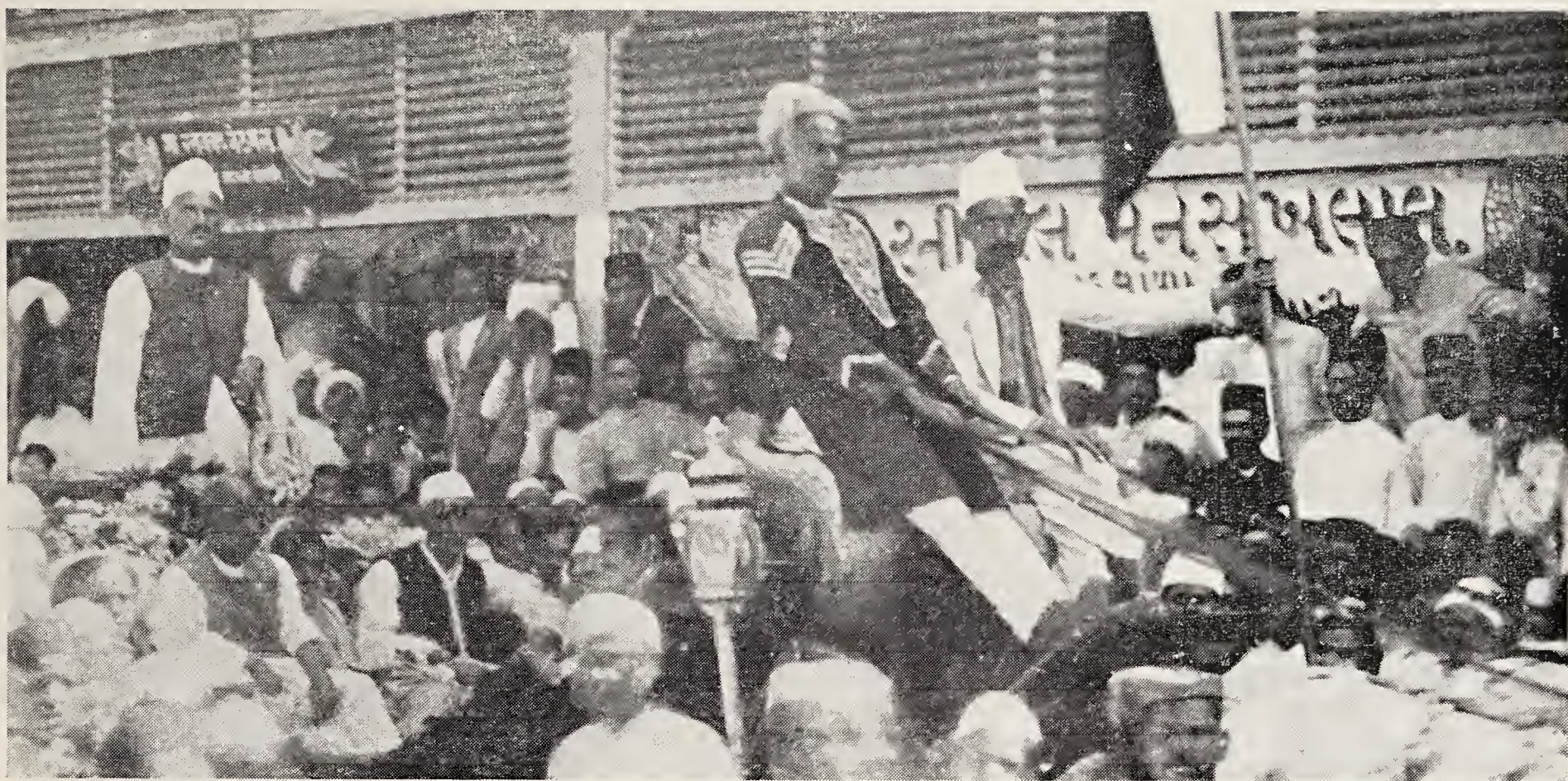
Vallabhbhai's reply was characteristic:

"If you wish to give us an opportunity to show you how well we have learnt what you have taught us and how we are putting into practice the training that you have been giving us for the past 10 years, do not come."



Hero of Bardoli, 1928

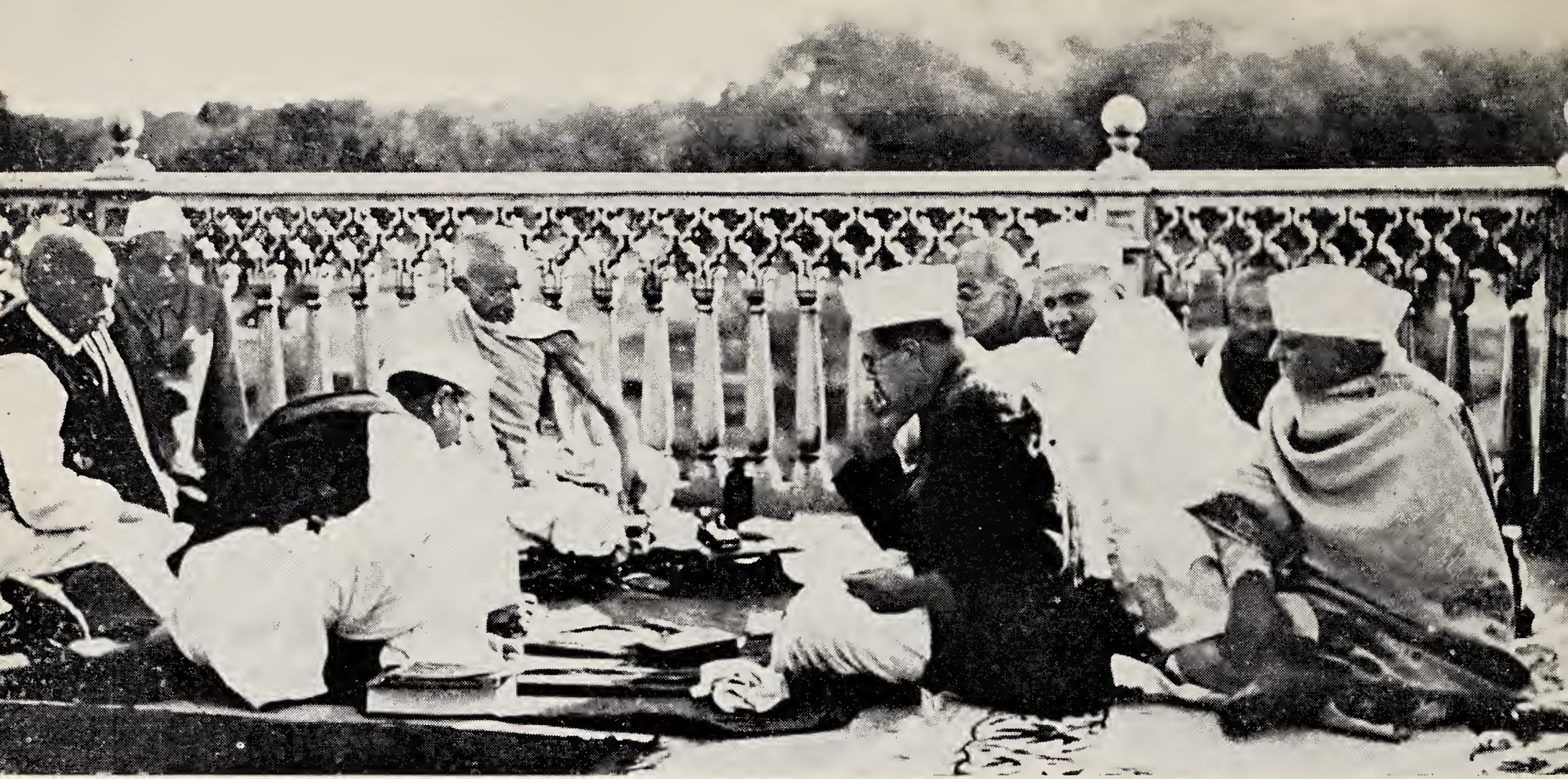
His victory in the Bardoli satyagraha won him the title of 'Sardar'. After Bardoli, he emerged as an all-India leader.



Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel being taken out in a procession in Ahmedabad, 1930

In a group of national leaders, 1931, seated between Dr. M.A. Ansari and Jawaharlal Nehru





At the Congress Working Committee meeting at Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, 1931



President,
Karachi Congress, 1931

The Sardar declared:
*"There is no receding from
the Lahore resolution of
Complete Independence."*



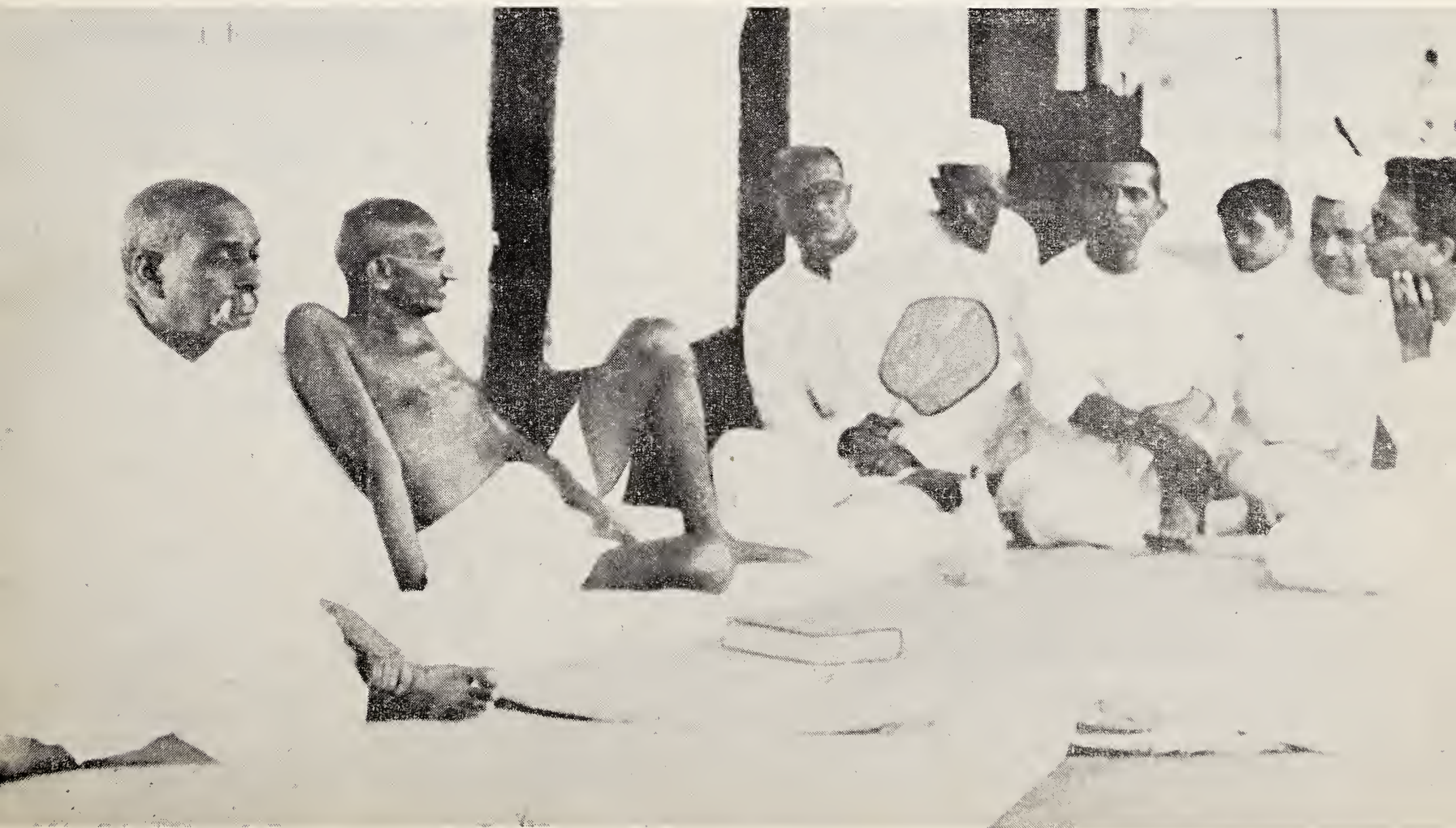
In 1931

← Letter dated September 7, 1931 to Gandhiji in the Sardar's own handwriting regarding the enquiry into hardships of Bardoli peasants



With Bhulabhai Desai, November 14, 1931
Bhulabhai presented the case of the peasants.
Standing behind Sardar Patel is his daughter
Maniben Patel.

With Gandhiji at Borsad



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Column:

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Superintendent,
Karavda Central Prison,
(Poona)

W.B. Central Prison.

Nesik Road

8th Nov. 1973

Superintendent,

Nash Road Central Prison.

My dear Schubert

I had received this
your message for of contribution
from you kamala and Sasogani Savi
and I must Thank you all for
this same

This time fate has been very
very unkind to me and I have
had some terrible blows one
after another ~~being my~~
~~loss of my~~ ~~father~~ At first
my dear old mother died
in May 1932 and soon after¹

The Sardar's letter dated May 29, 1933 to Gandhiji when the latter broke his fast.

“At this auspicious moment both of us [Vallabhbhai and Chhaganlal Joshi] seek your blessings. God has indeed been immensely kind, but now I beg of you, be kind to us.”

life). After that he himself
was laid up with typhoid for
a very long time and at one
time during his illness we
had all lost hopes when
some of our Ahmedabad friends
were so unmoved that they
wired to me for allowing
them to secure the release
of Maniben on parole for
some time. I could not agree
to their proposal and Maniben
was also not willing to go
out on parole. Fortunately
however he got over his
illness and although ~~it~~^{he} took

strength he is now quite alright
again. Now comes on top of all
this the hardest blow of
my brother's death in a foreign
country. It is so sad to think
that we shall meet no more.
He was very unwilling to go
out of India this time but
fate took him away and
~~although he was in Gujarat~~
for four days before his departure
but then - ~~he was only a month~~
~~before he was away~~
~~from the world~~. (X) but
more for his death at a
place where ~~there was~~
~~was a history he lived~~

The abundance of deep sympathy
from my dear friends sustains
me here in my tribulation and
your message has given me
great consolation. Please convey
my thanks to Kamala. Also to
Lala Girdharilal for his very touching
letter.

How is mother now?

I am so glad Krishna has
found her permanent home in

Gujarat and you have now been
relieved of one of your heavy
responsibilities.

Has Indu gone to Vileparle
or is she still at Allahabad?

I hope Kamala has now
recovered and is able to
move about freely.

How is your health?

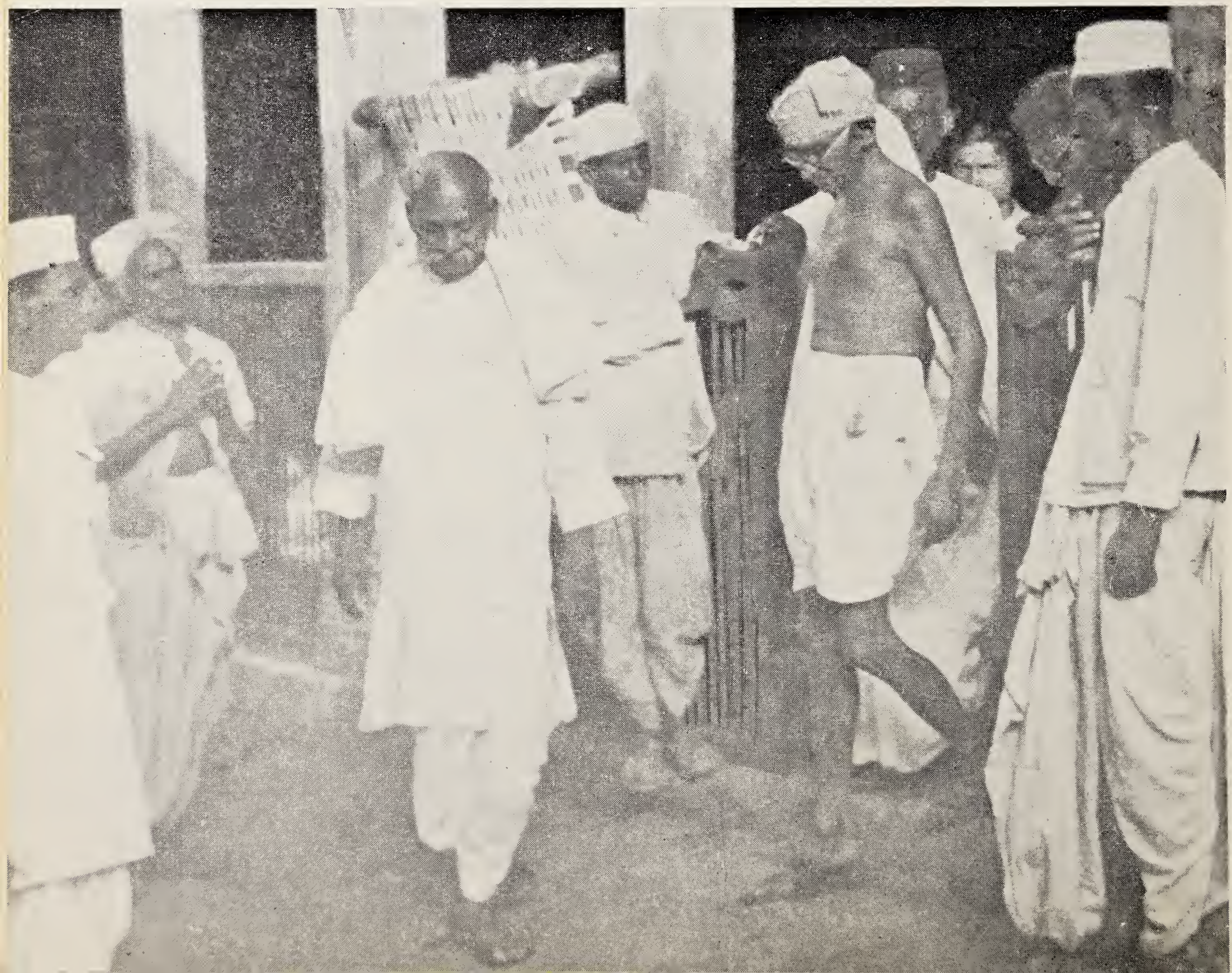
Do write to me all
about you and your family
tell me you are free to do so.

I am alright

Yours
Vallabhbhai.

Sardar Patel's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru

with Gandhiji on a tour of villages in the Borsad taluka in Gujarat during a plague epidemic, May 1935



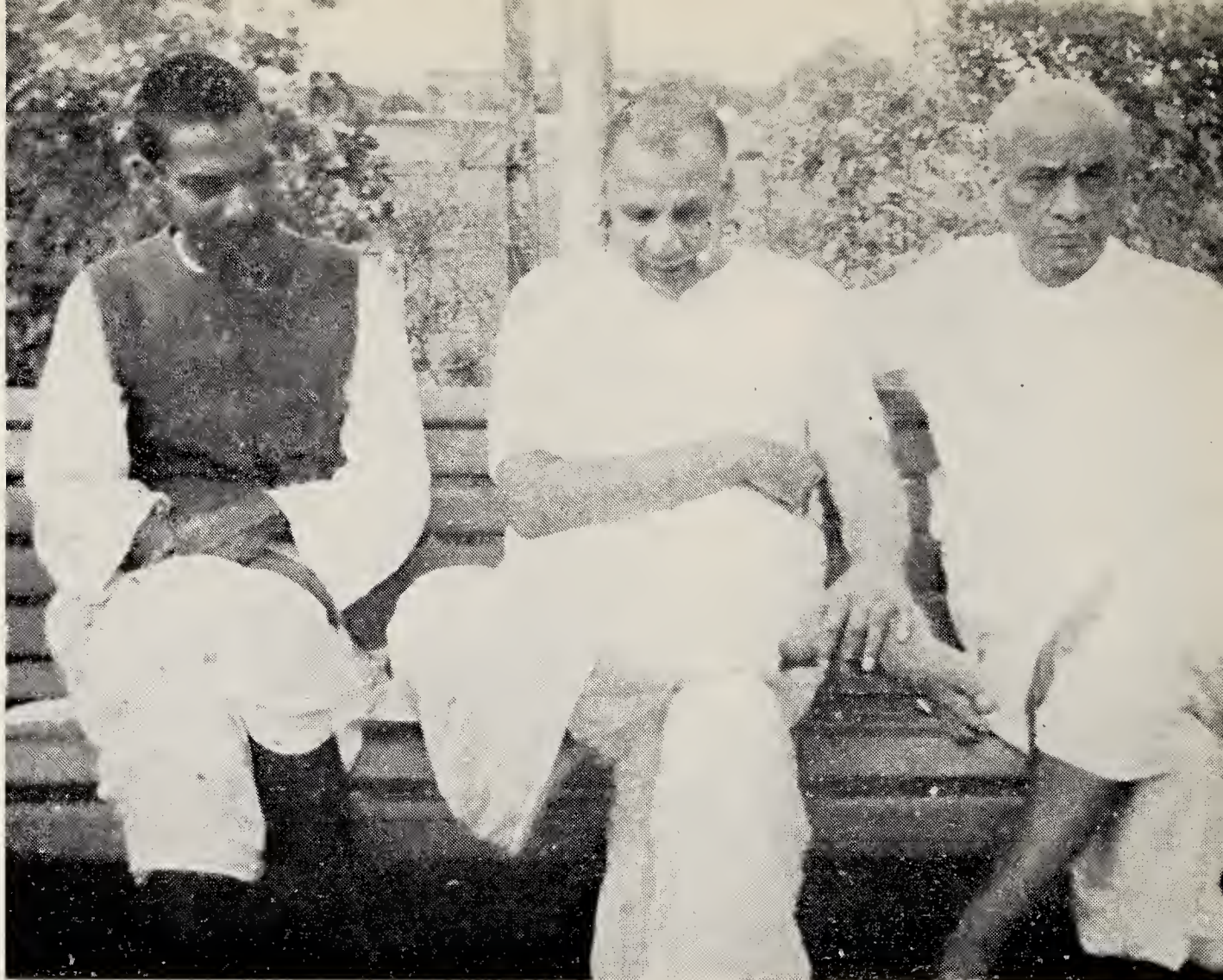


At the Haripura Congress, February 1938



With Dr. Rajendra Prasad,
June 6, 1939

With Dr. Rajendra Prasad
and Jamnalal Bajaj at
Wardha, August 8, 1939



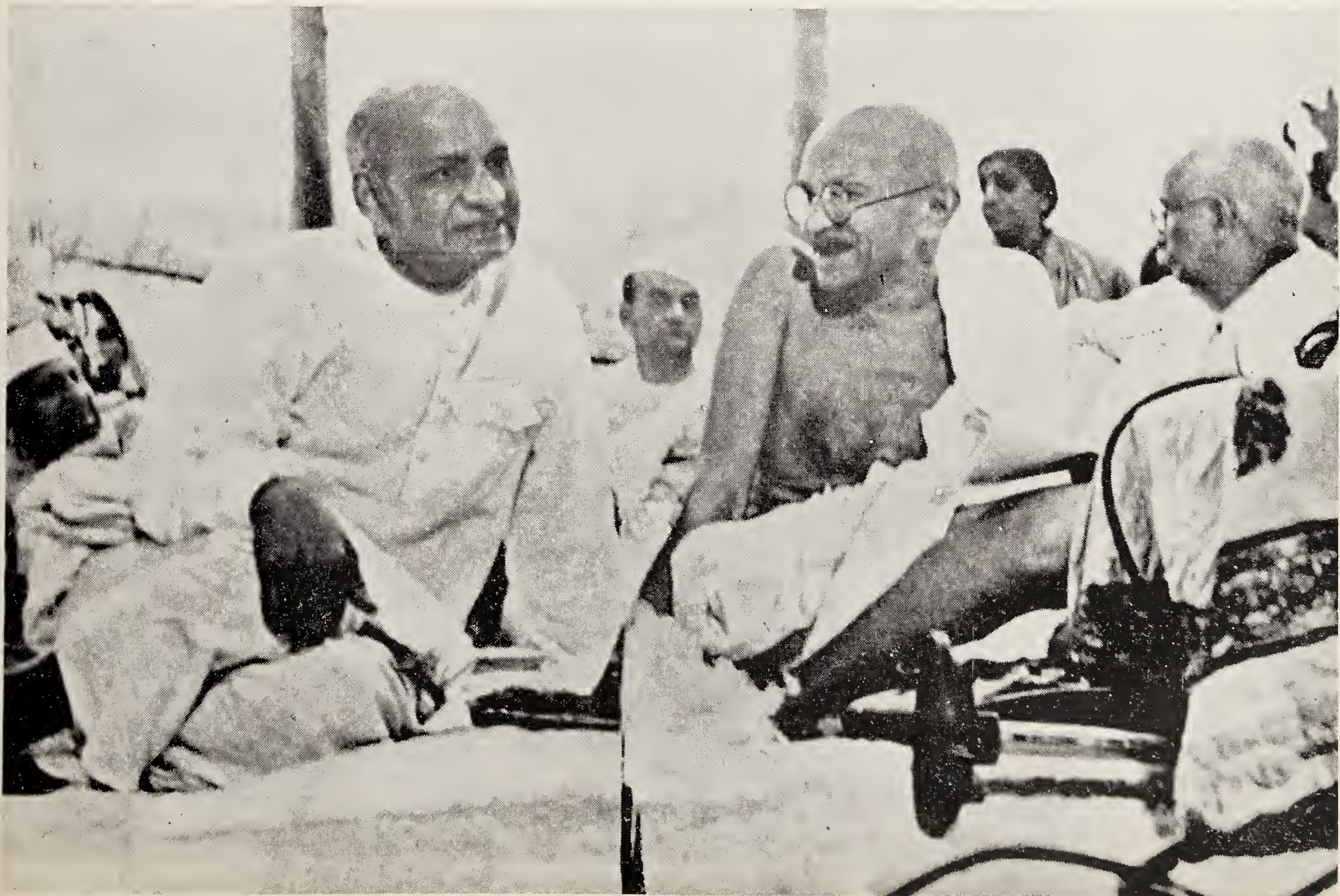
With Gandhiji and Dr. Rajendra Prasad at the Delhi Railway Station, 1940





At the Congress Working Committee meeting, Wardha, February 1942

With Gandhiji

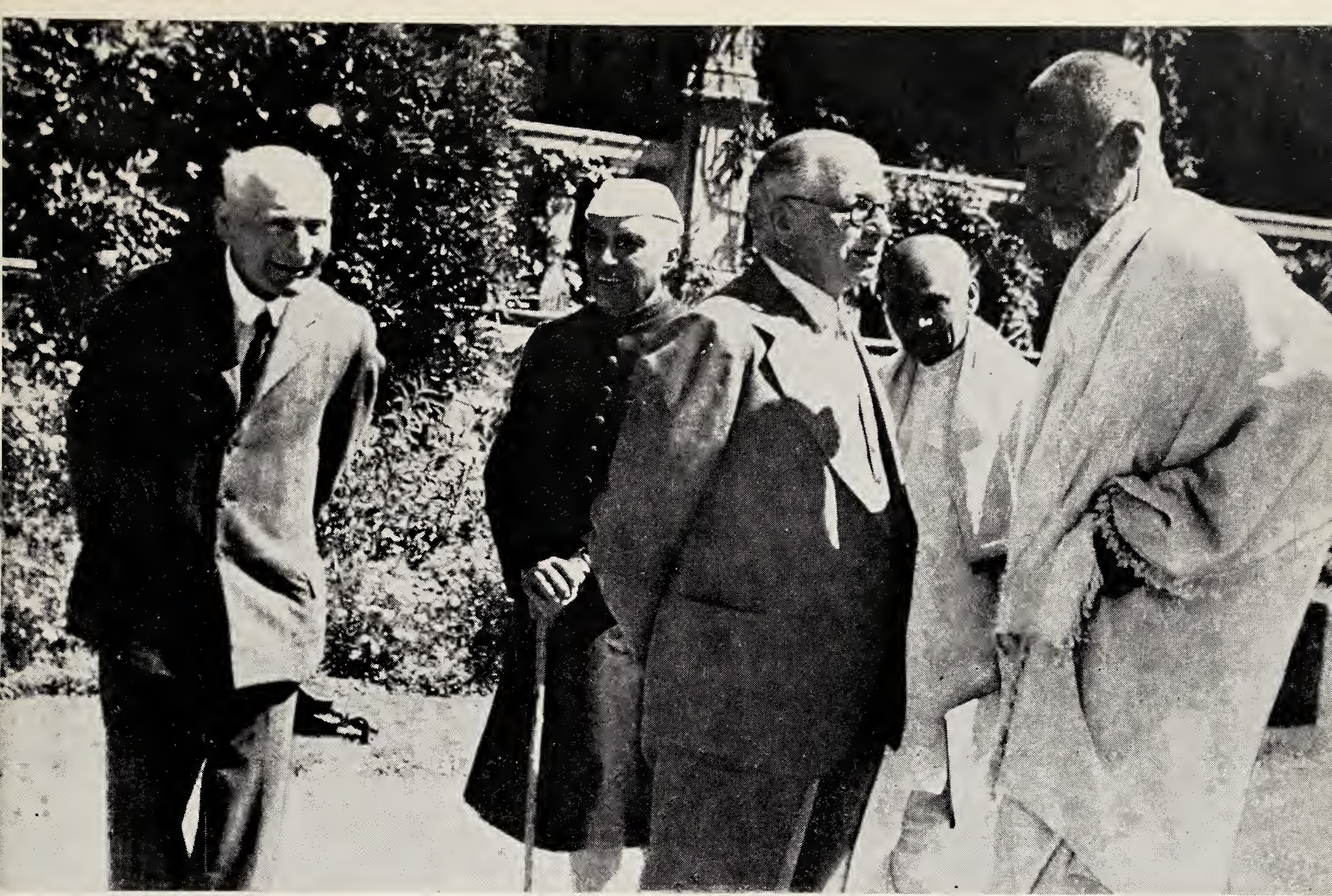


With Gandhiji during the
Simla Conference, July 1945



Leaving the Viceregal Lodge in Simla after discussions, May 1946



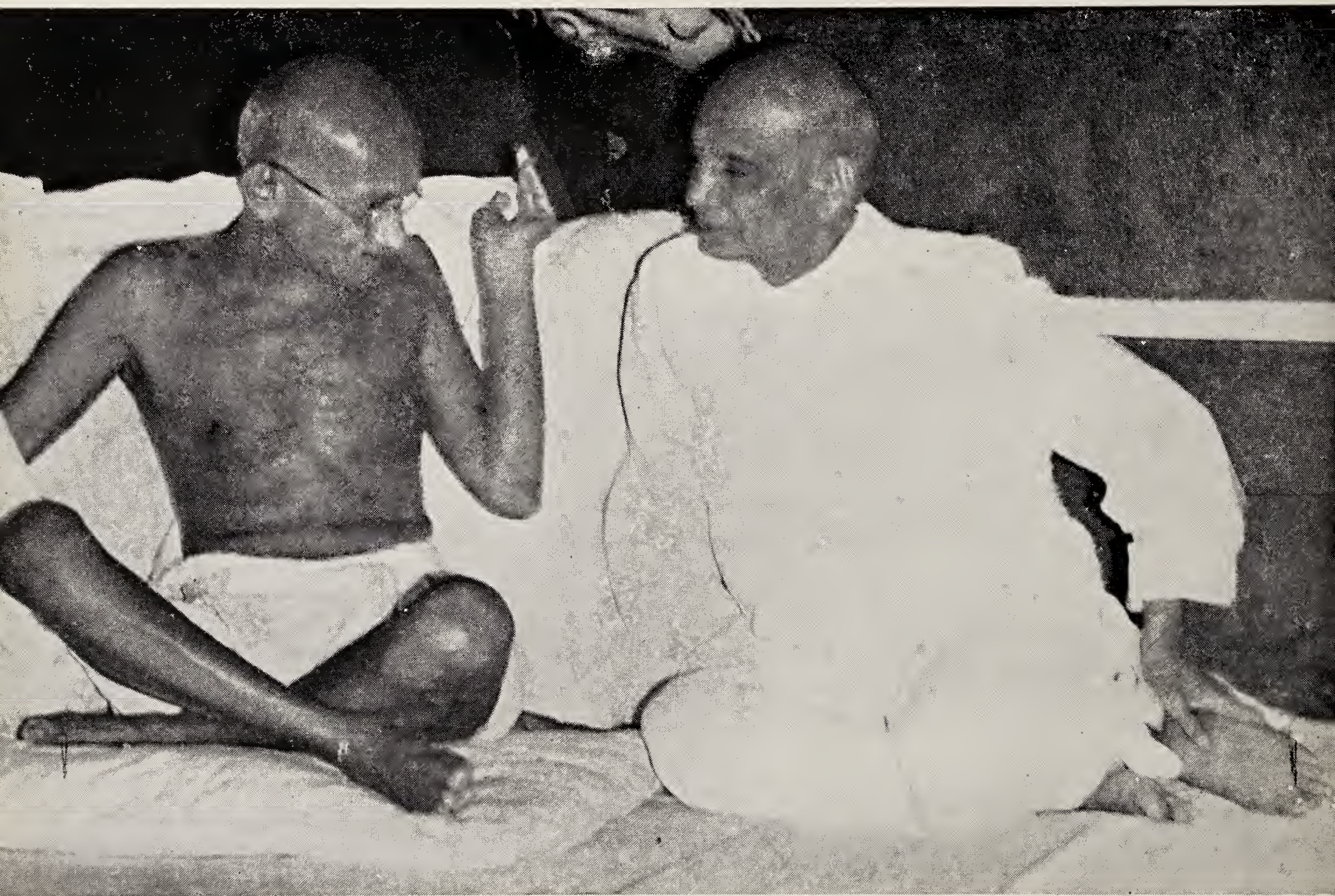


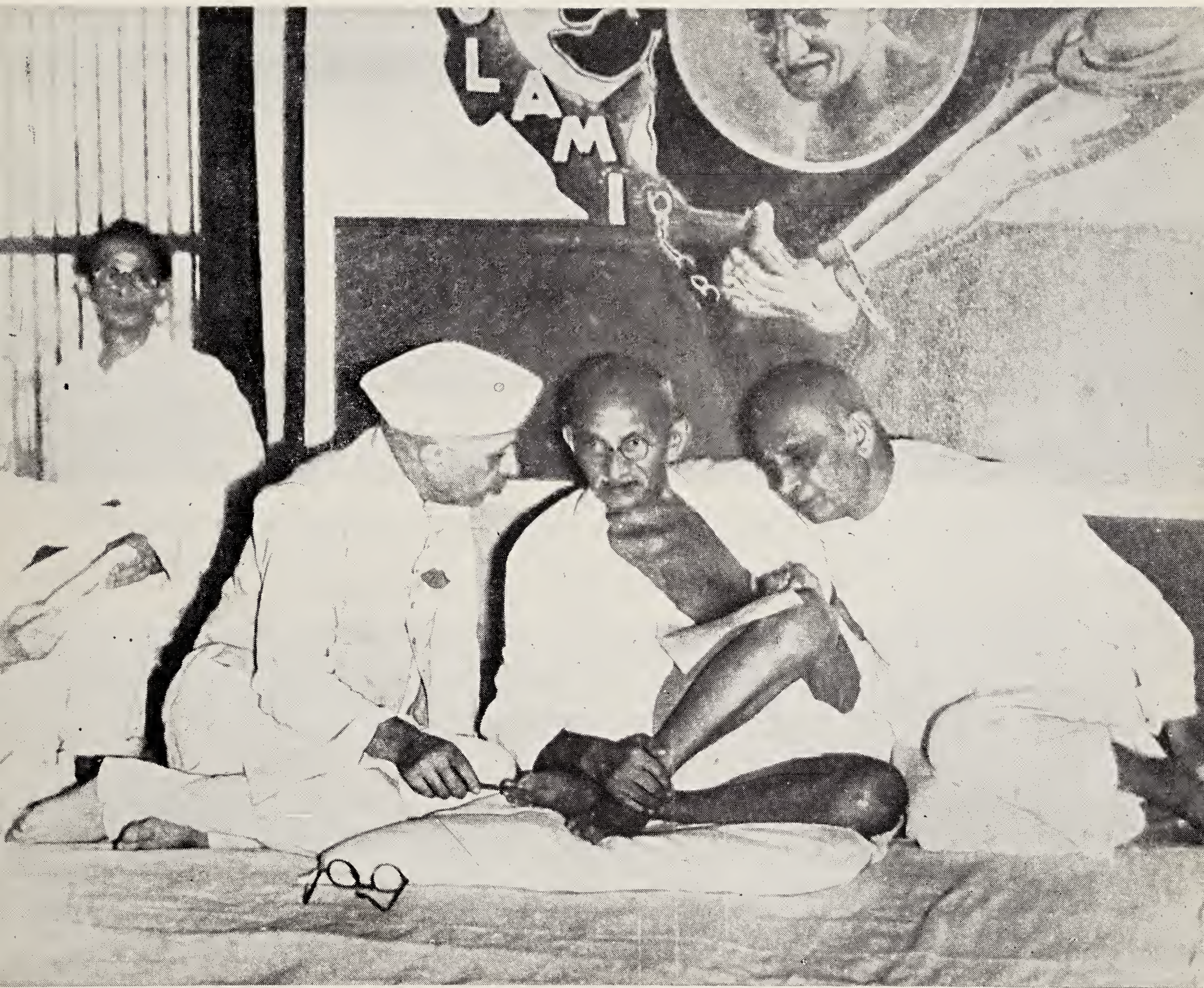
With Lord Pethick-Lawrence (extreme left) who led the Cabinet Mission, Simla, May 1946



With Acharya Kripalani,
Congress President, 1946

With Gandhiji at the All India Congress Committee session held in Delhi in 1946
to consider the Interim Government proposal





The Triumvirate—Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel—in intimate conversation at the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay, July 1946. Following the discussions, the Congress agreed to participate in the formation of an Interim Government.



Members of the Interim Government after assuming office on September 2, 1946
(From left to right): Sarat Chandra Bose, Jagjivan Ram, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Asaf Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru and Syed Ali Zaheer

Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Sardar Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhiji at the All India Congress Committee meeting, Delhi, June 1947



With Lord
Mountbatten,
July 1947



Being sworn in as a member of the Union Cabinet on August 15, 1947 by Lord Mountbatten, Governor General. Also seen are Lady Mountbatten, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Baldev Singh (right); and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru and the Chief Justice of India, H.J. Kania (left).





At the Khasi States Peoples' Conference during his visit to Assam, January 1948

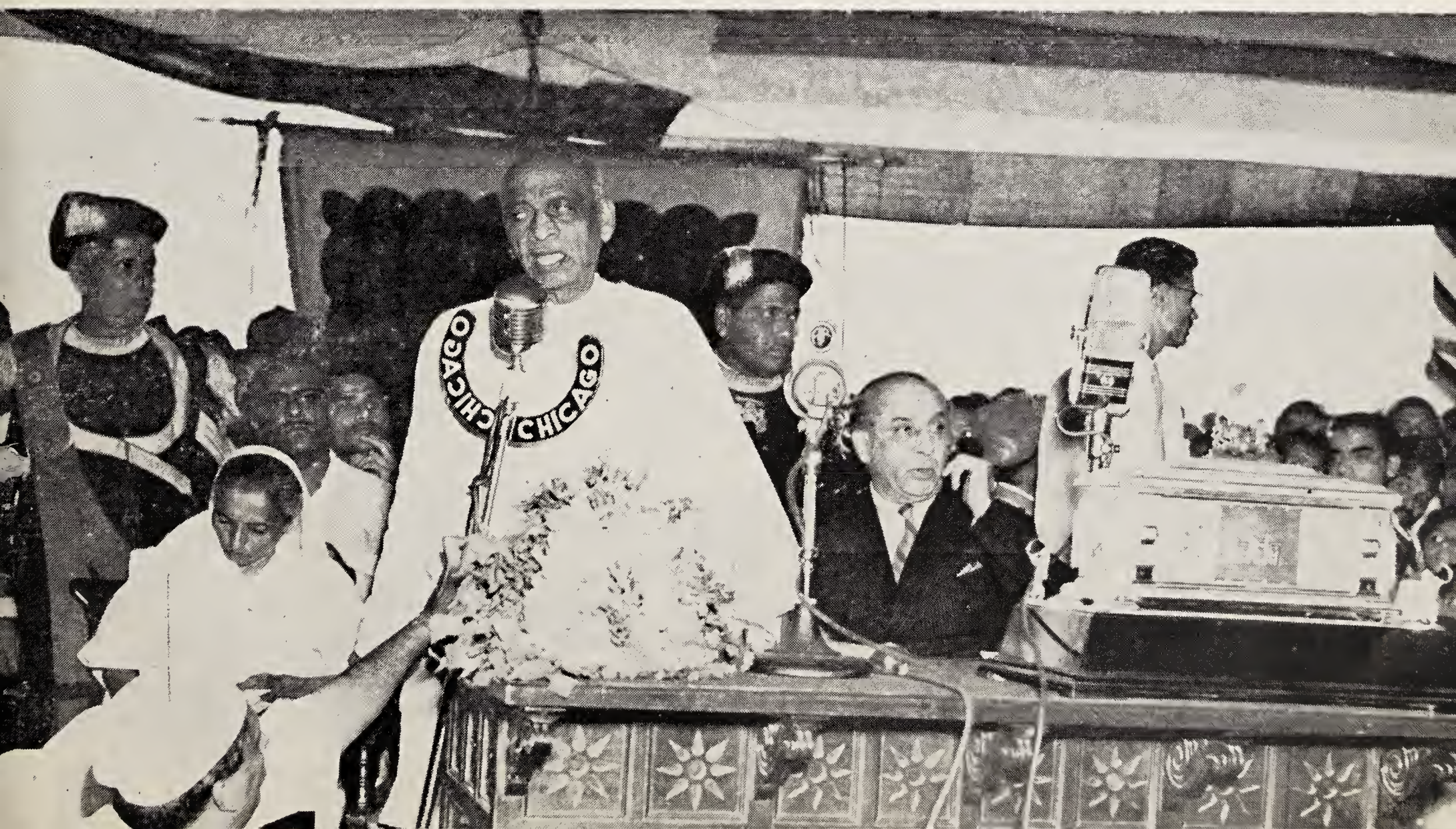
At a public meeting in Shillong in January 1948, Vallabhbhai said: *"There is no room here for provincial parochialism."*





Planting a mango tree in Government House, Lucknow, January 1948

Replying to Bombay Municipal Corporation civic address on January 16, 1948, he said: *"So long as we are in Government we have to govern."*





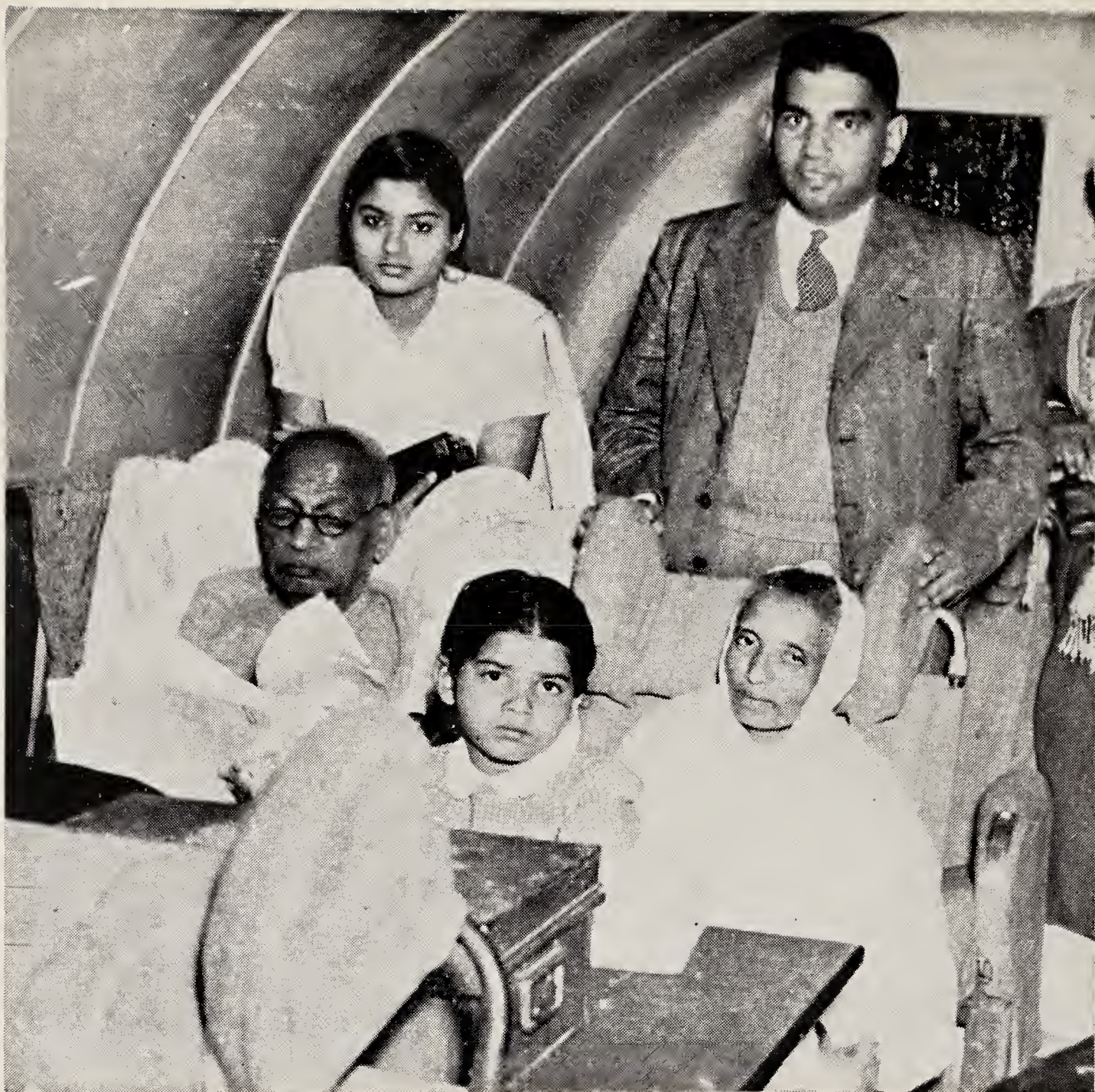
Sardar Patel made an impassioned appeal for unity and peace at a public meeting in Patna, January 26, 1948

At a press conference in New Delhi, reviewing constitutional progress of the Indian states, January 29, 1948





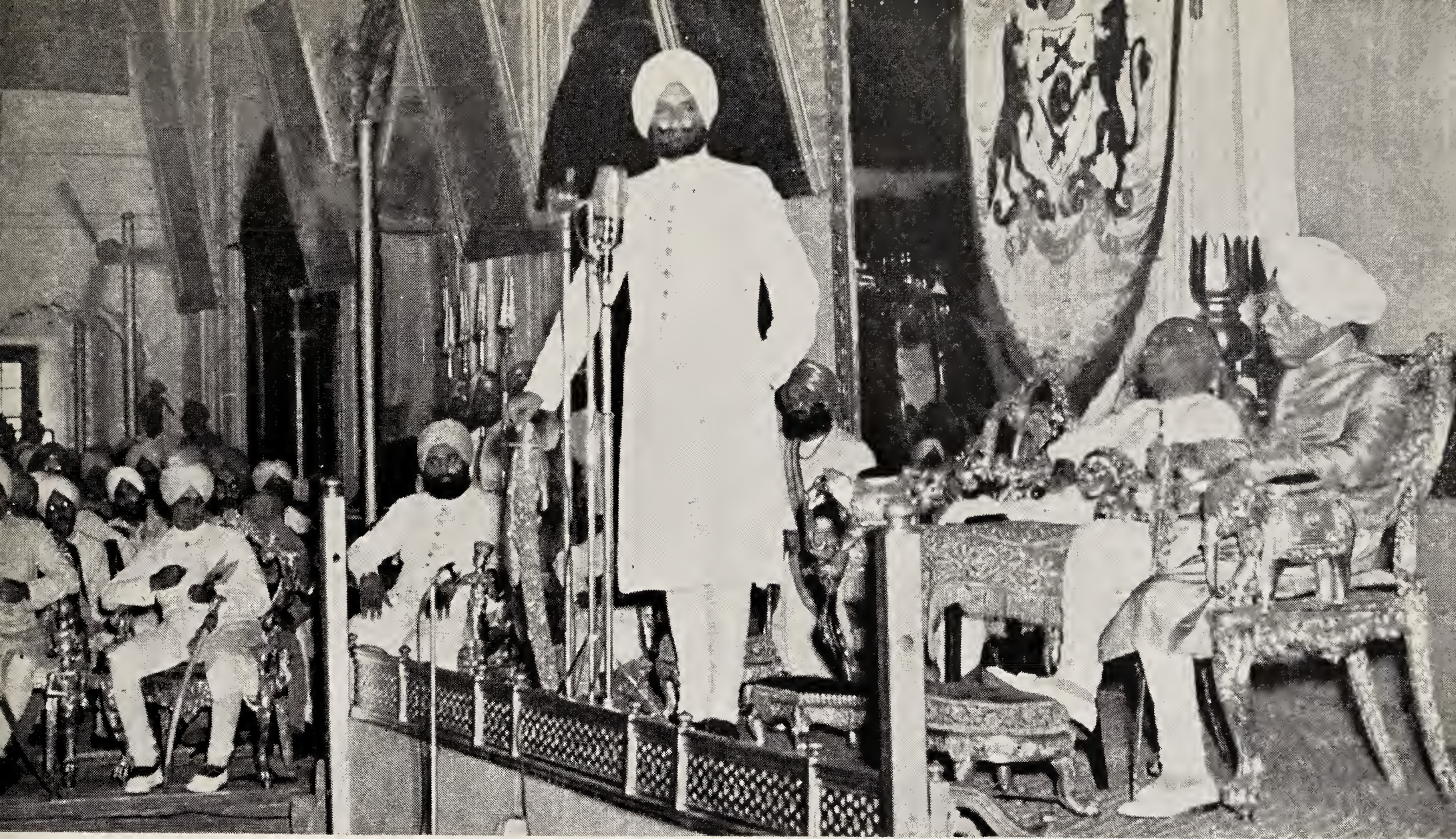
January 31, 1948 During Gandhiji's last journey



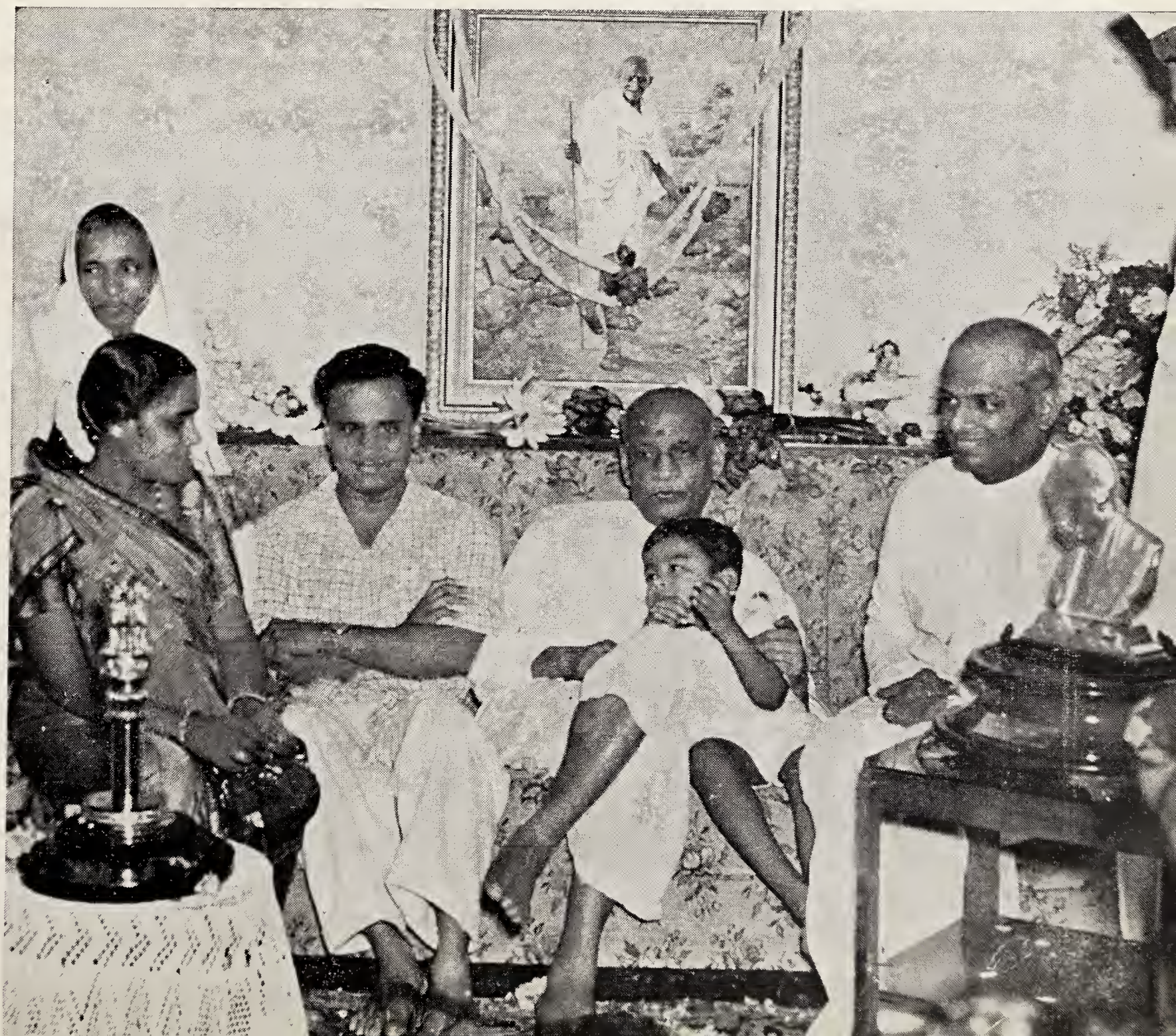
Studying files during a plane journey



Administering the oath of office to the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar as the Rajpramukh of the new Saurashtra State, Jamnagar, February 15, 1948



At the
inauguration
of the Patiala
and the East
Punjab
States Union
(Pepsu) in
Patiala, July
15, 1948



With
members of
his family on
his birthday,
October 31,
1948



Receiving the Abhinandan Granth (Felicitation Volume) from
Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Allahabad, November 1948

At Allahabad University, November 27, 1948, when the degree
of Doctor of Laws was conferred on him.





Sitting for Mrs. Clara Quein, a Dutch sculptor, November 1948

Inaugurating the Legislative Assembly of the Malwa Union,
Gwalior, December 4, 1948





At a Montessori
school, Pilani,
December 1948

Addressing a public meeting at Udaipur, January 14, 1949





Spinning at the Bardoli Ashram, January 1949



Addressing a mammoth meeting at Fateh Maidan, Hyderabad, February 27, 1949





Arriving to inaugurate the
Saurashtra Constituent Assembly
at Rajkot, January 24, 1949

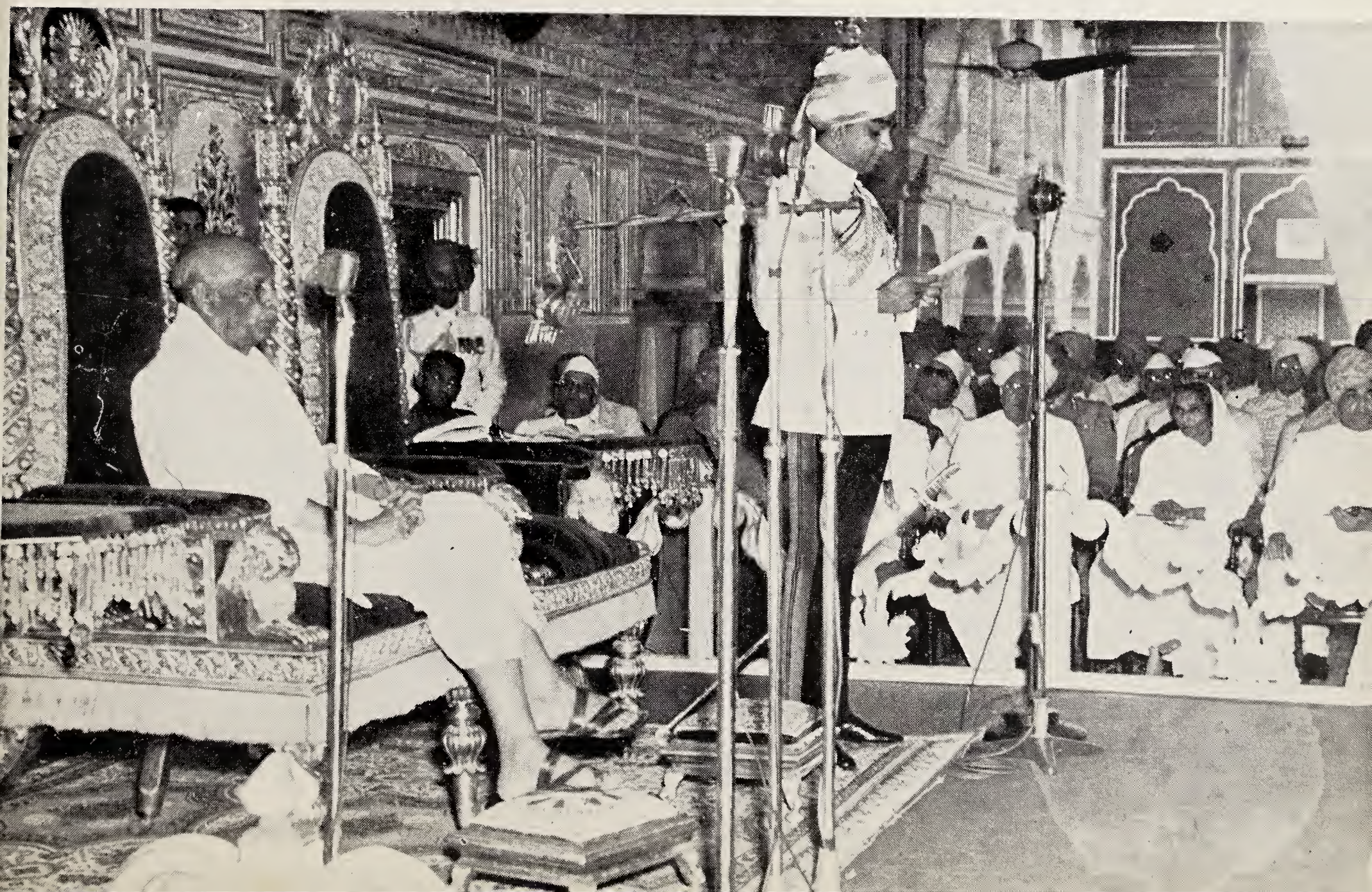


With peasants at Chittor,
January 1949



Receiving the degree of Doctor of Laws at Osmania University, Hyderabad, February 26, 1949

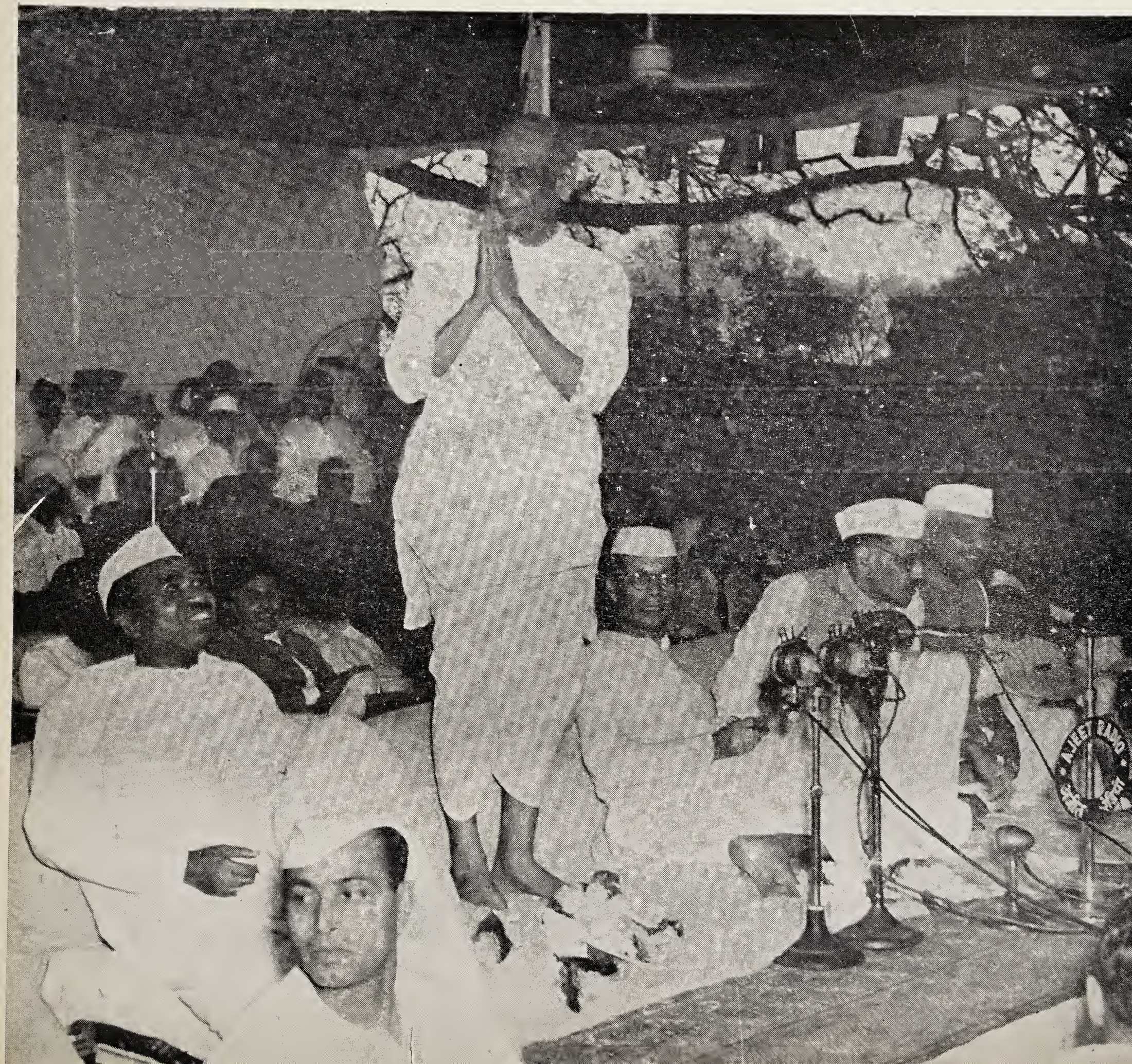
At the inauguration of the Greater Rajasthan Union, Jaipur, March 30, 1949

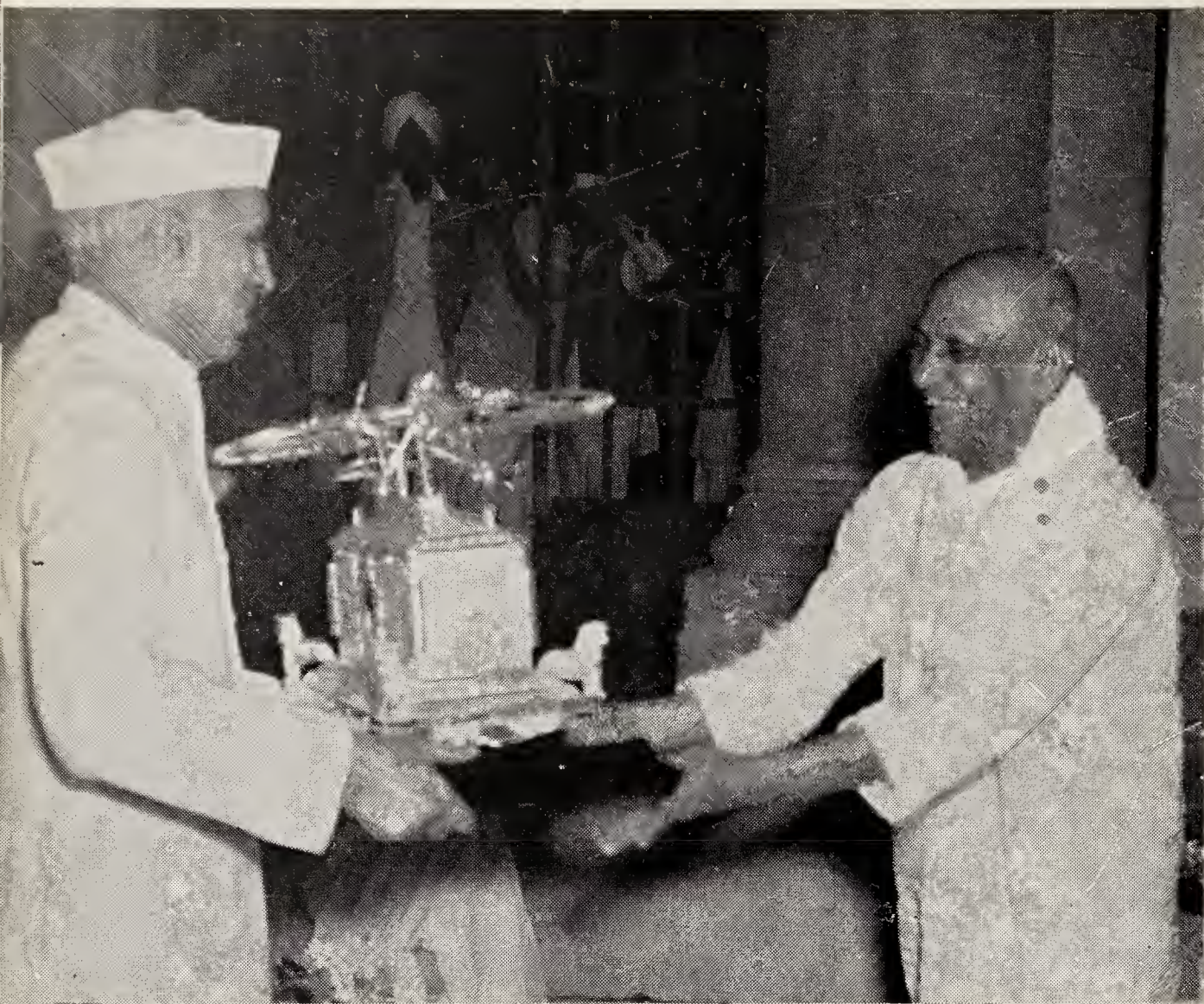




Broadcasting to the nation, March 14, 1949

Addressing a session of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, Indore, May 6, 1949





A replica of the plane carrying Sardar Patel which forced landed near Jaipur on March 29, 1949. This souvenir, here being presented by Jawaharlal Nehru to Sardar Patel at a reception in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, April 7, 1949, was later presented by Sardar Patel to the Indian Air Force.

With Jawaharlal Nehru, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in Kashmir, 1949





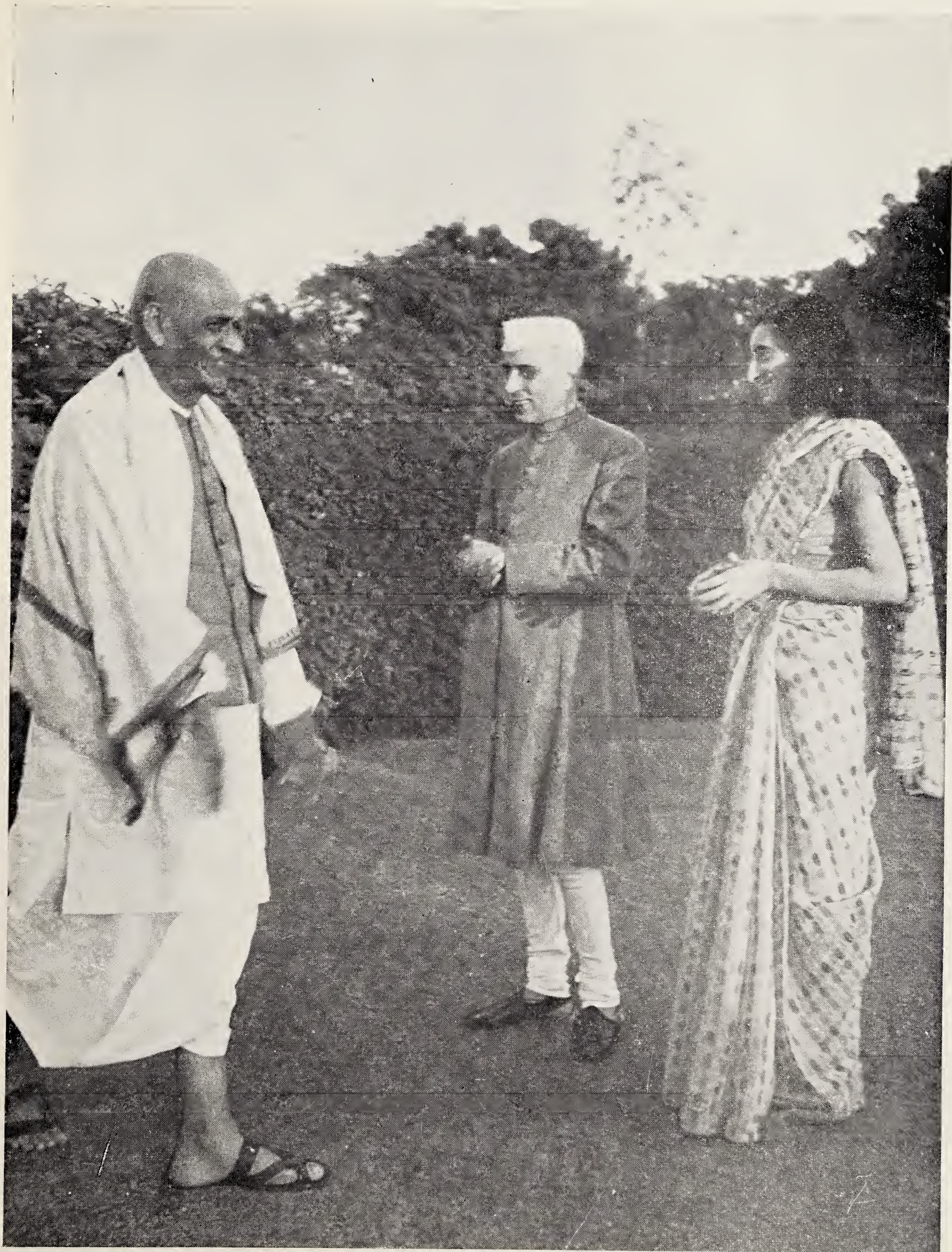
Glancing through messages of felicitations on his birthday, October 31, 1949

“ . . . a friend and colleague on whom
one could invariably rely . . . a tower
of strength which revived wavering
hearts . . . ”

—Jawaharlal Nehru

With Jawaharlal Nehru





With Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi

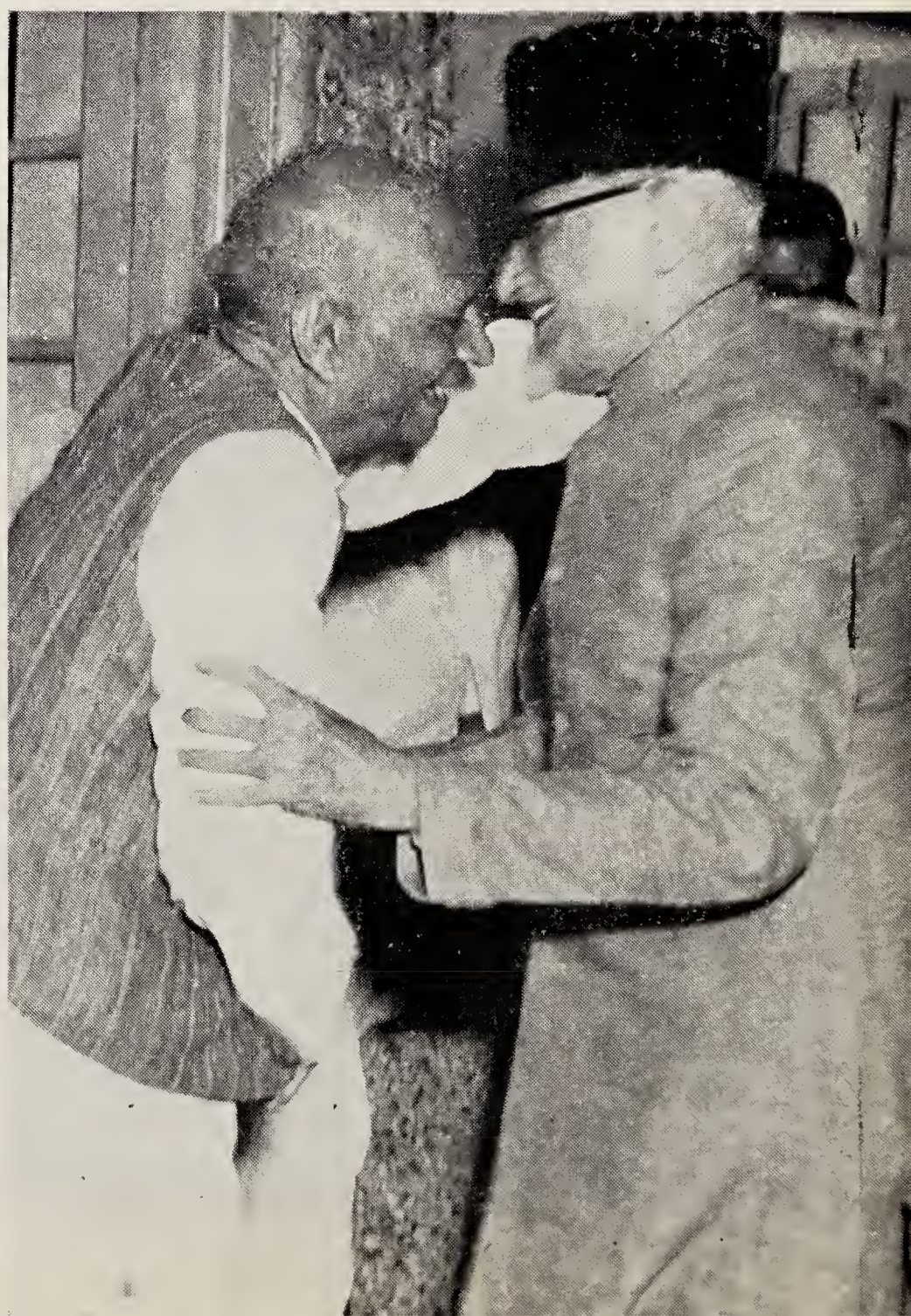


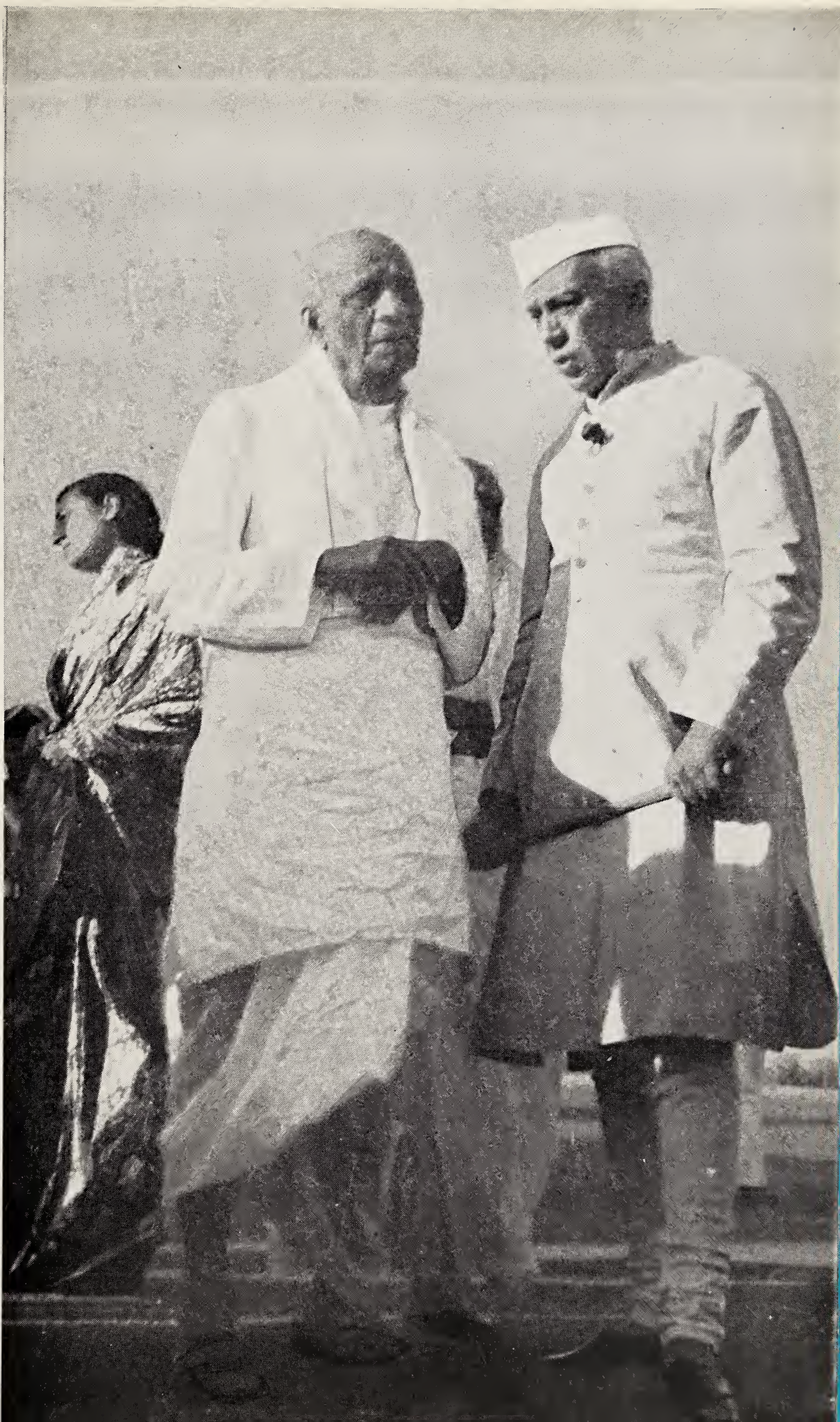
With C. Rajagopalachari

With Thakkar Bapa

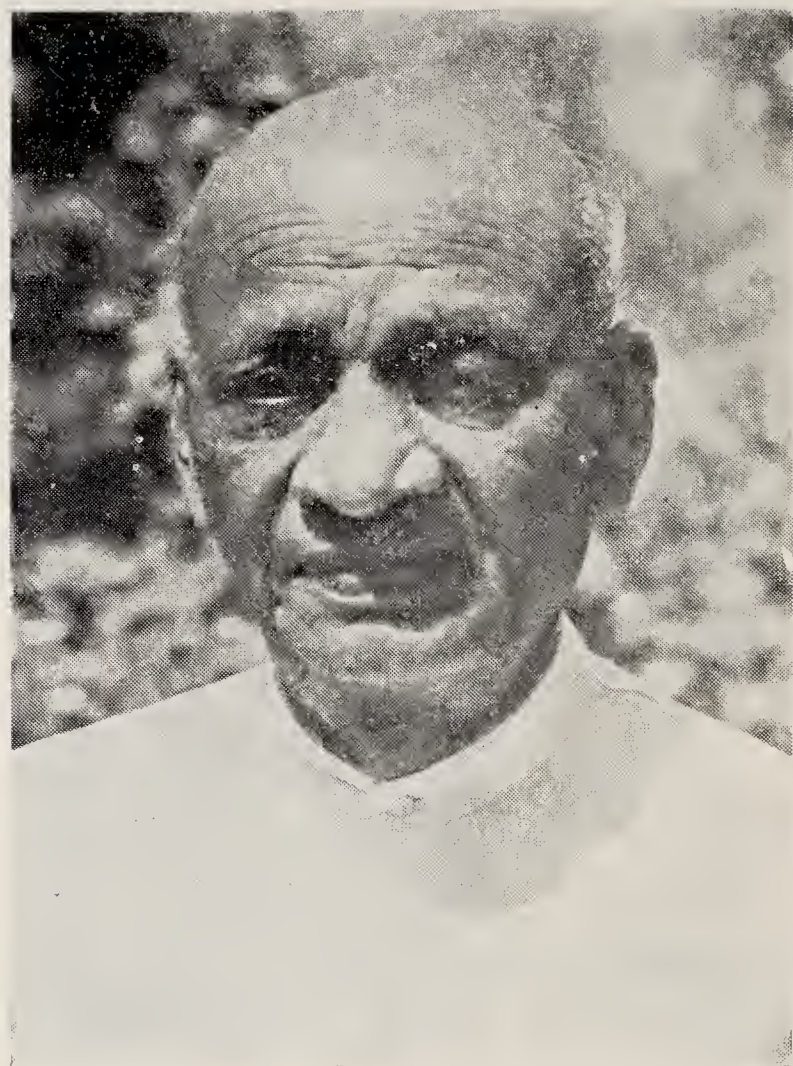
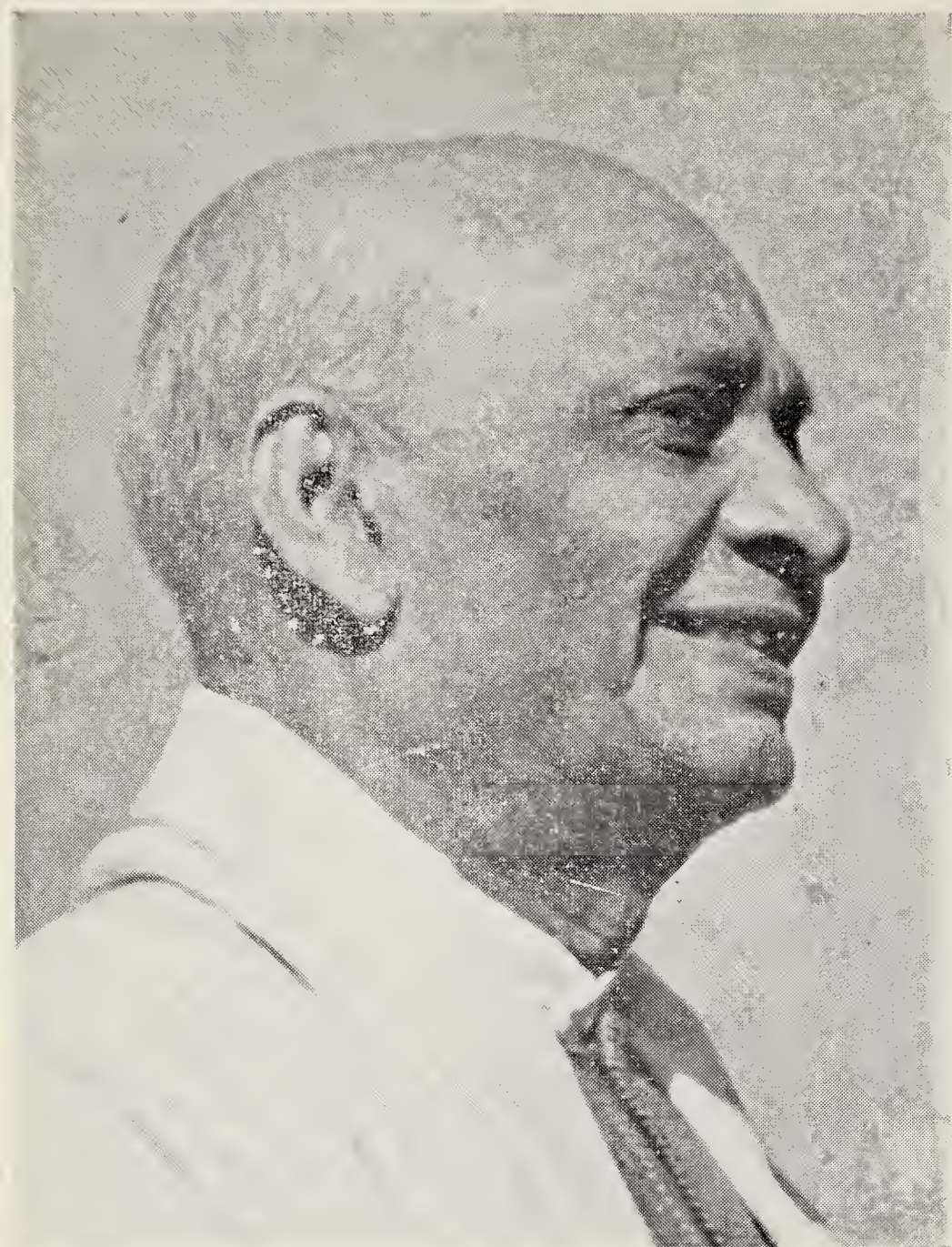


With Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

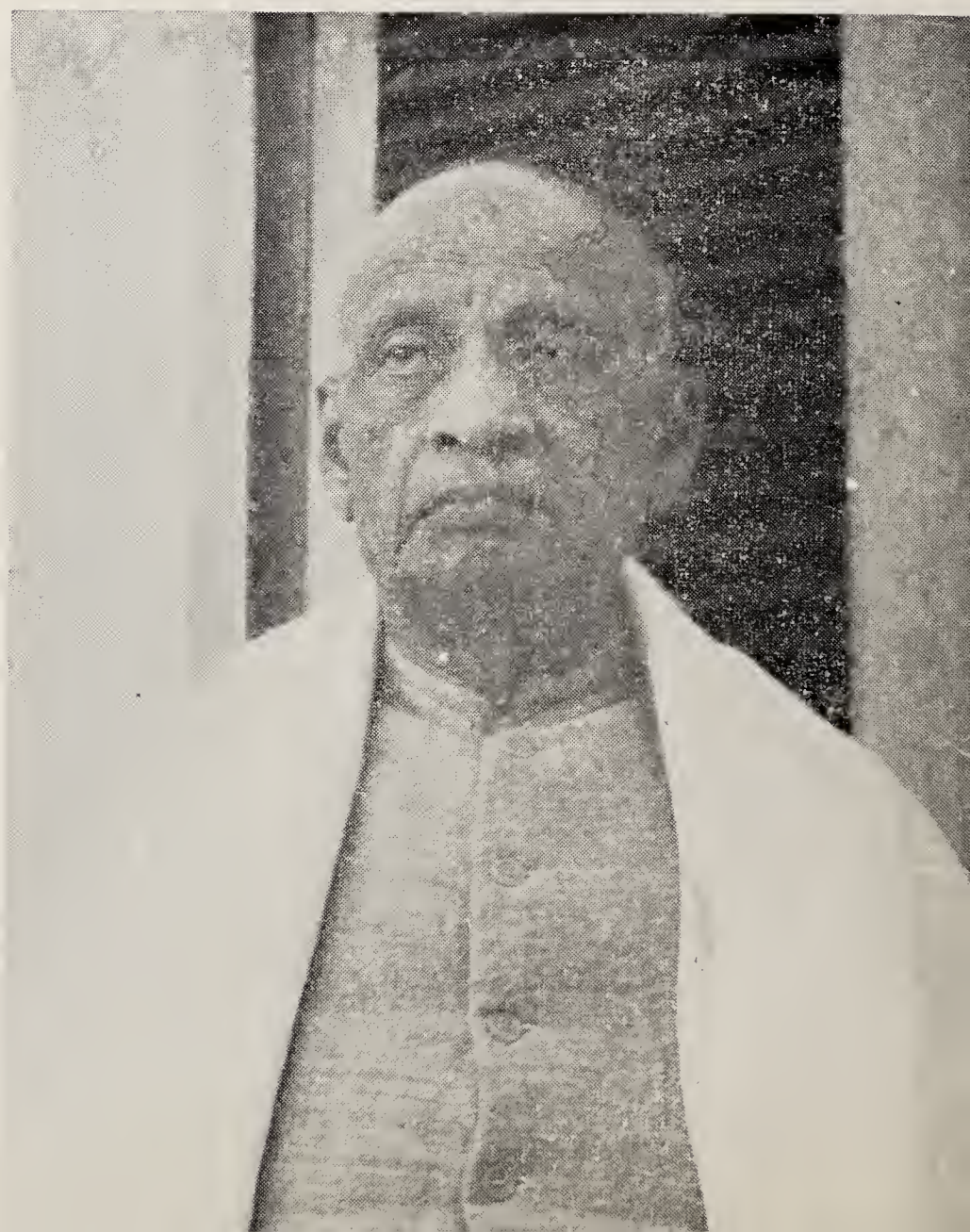
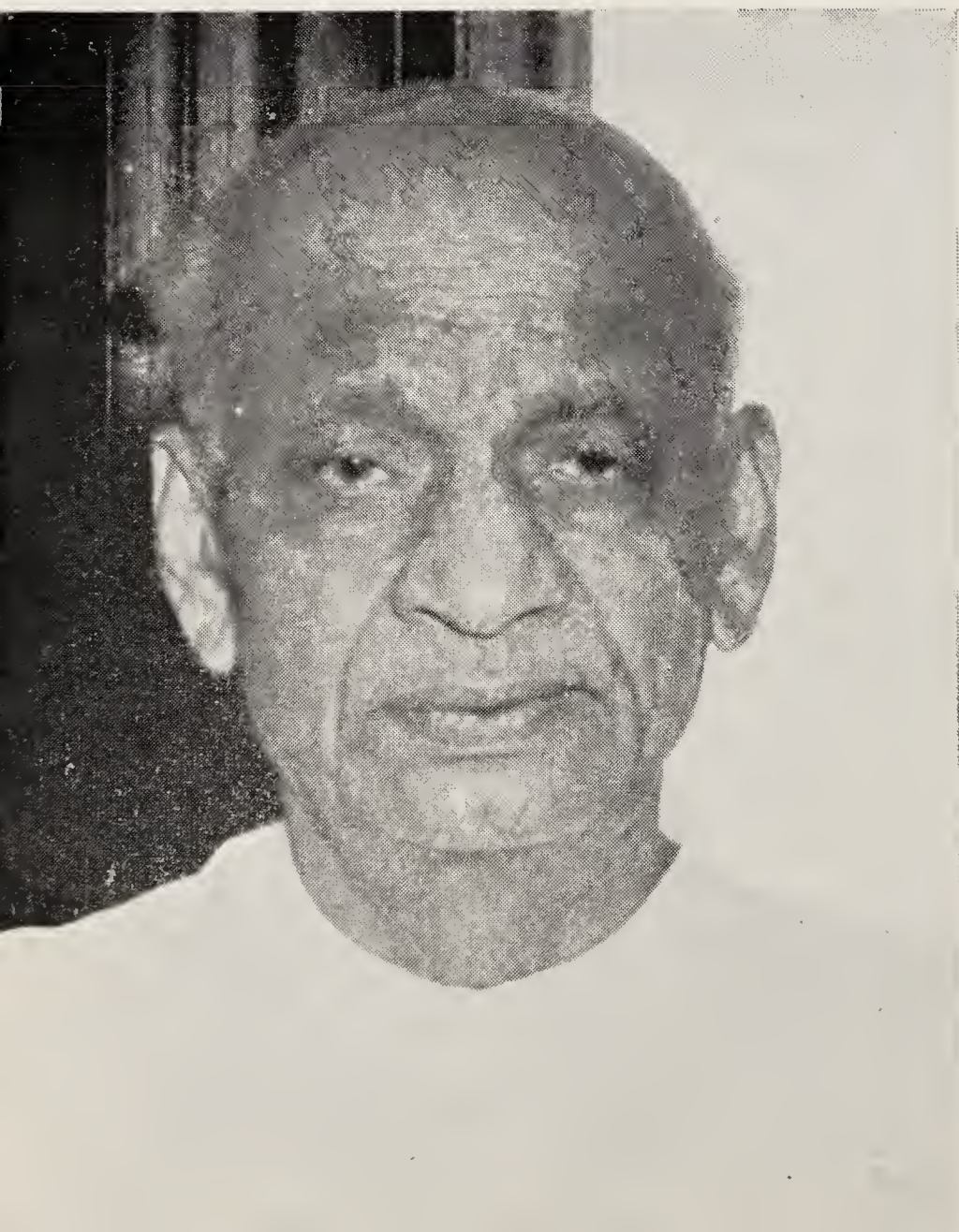




With
Jawaharlal Nehru
and
Indira Gandhi



Studies





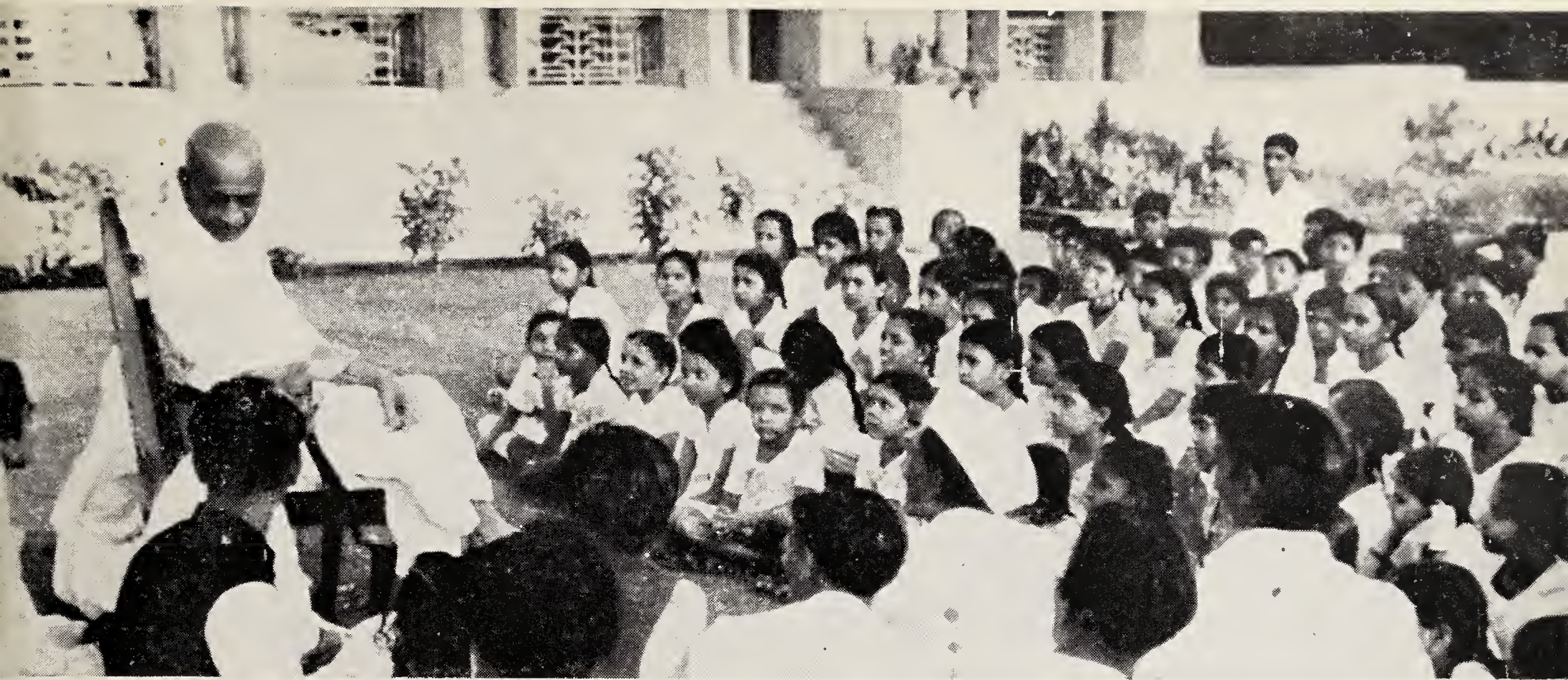
In a garden



Signing the Constitution of India, January 24, 1950



With
Dr. Rajendra Prasad
and
Maulana
Abul Kalam Azad



"In the midst of my onerous responsibilities and heavy pre-occupations, I delight in the company of children."
—Sardar Patel

On board the I.N.S. *Delhi*, May 18, 1950

In the Kanyakumari temple, May 1950





At rest
(December 15, 1950, Bombay)

“....By many of us here he will be remembered as a great captain of our forces in the struggle for freedom, and as one who gave us sound advice in times of trouble as well as in moments of victory....”

—Jawaharlal Nehru

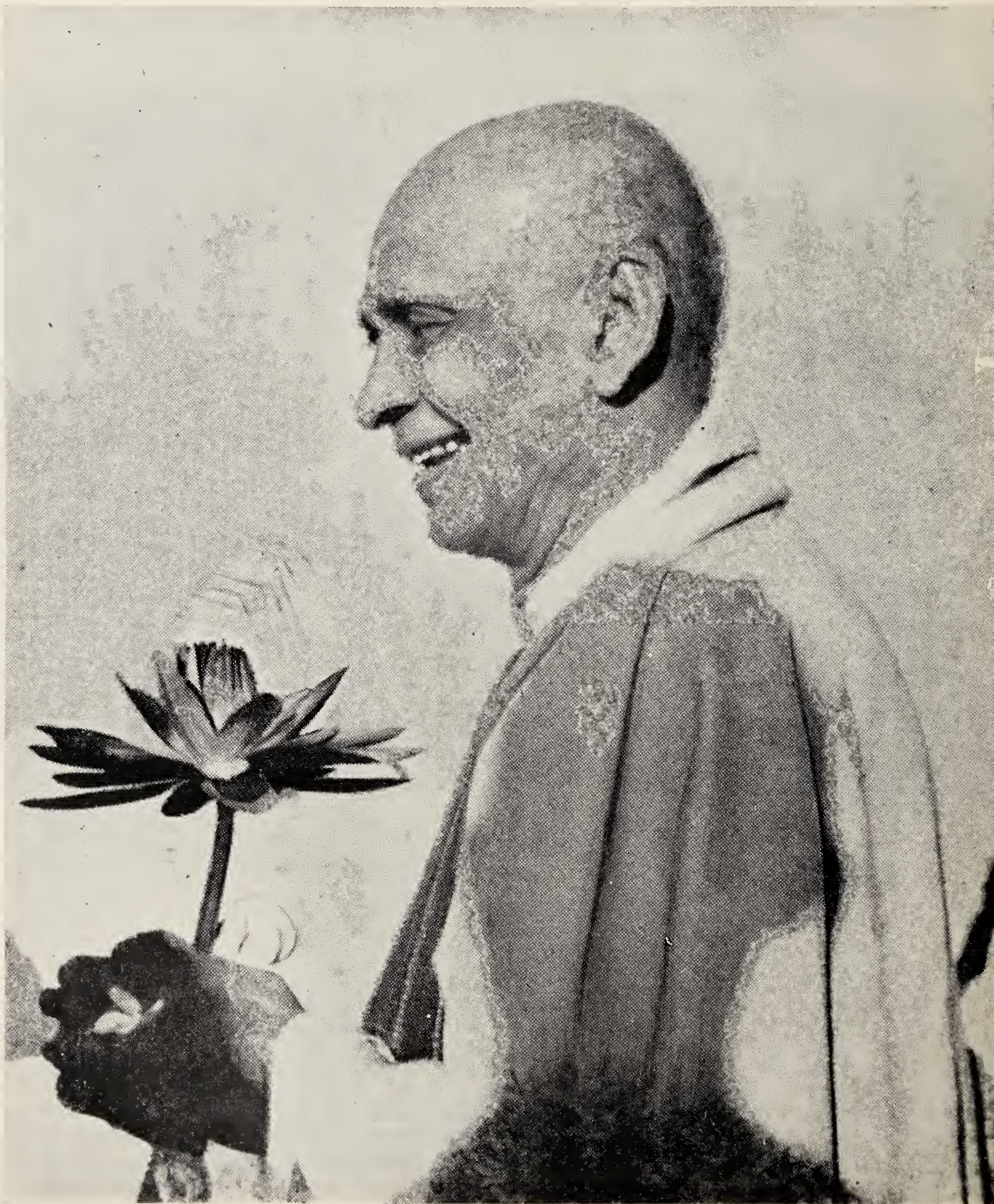


The last journey

“Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of those leading figures and nation builders who gave a new direction to our struggle for freedom under the unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. His complete dedication to the cause of the nation will for ever inspire the coming generations.”

—Indira Gandhi

"Work is undoubtedly worship but laughter is life."—Sardar Patel



Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following organisations and also to those whose names do not appear here for want of adequate information:

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